MARSHALLING THE PAST

Ancient India and its Modern Histories

NAYANJOT LAHIRI

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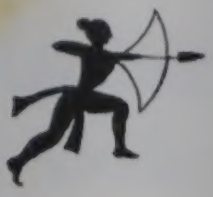

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To

DILIP K. CHAKRABARTI

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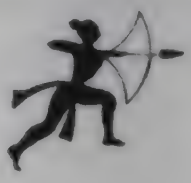


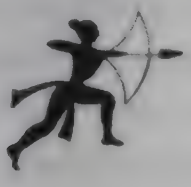
I AM GRATEFUL TO THE EDITORS OF THE FOLLOWING journals where several of the papers that make up this book were first published: *Antiquity* (Antiquity Publications Ltd, York), *World Archaeology* (Routledge Journals, Oxon), *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* (Sage Publications, New Delhi), *South Asian Studies* (The British Academy, London), *Economic and Political Weekly* (Sameeksha Trust, Mumbai). I would also like to thank Timothy Insoll who edited the conference volumes—*Case Studies in Archaeology and World Religion: The Proceedings of the Cambridge Conference* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1999) and *Belief in the Past: The Proceedings of the 2002 Manchester Conference on Archaeology and Religion* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004)—where two of the papers in this book first appeared.

Syntactical changes and modifications in citations have been introduced to make the style consistent. Within the earlier versions of some of the essays herein, a few works cited as 'unpublished' were subsequently published. Their dates of publication have been inserted despite the resulting oddity that, for example, a paper published first in 1998 cites another published in 1999. For so meticulously making all these changes and for her wonderful copy-editing skills I owe a great deal to Shyama Warner.

I have many guides to thank for this book: colleagues, friends, students, and scholars. They are acknowledged at the end of each

essay. Here, there is one individual that I want to specially mention. This is my publisher and friend Rukun Advani. An exemplar of the brilliant editor, he has shepherded many of my books, unfailingly improving my writing with his inexhaustible and amazing treasure of insights. This is not a debt that I can ever repay, but it is one that I carry close to my heart.

Introduction



THE ESSAYS IN THIS BOOK, INDEPENDENT ARTICLES here brought together, were written over some twenty years, from 1990 to 2010. As they lie before me now, I'm wondering whether they might yield threads, a unifying pattern, any of those straws that the solemnity of the academic trade obliges one to search out in an effort to suggest that what's arrayed isn't a jumble but a tapestry.

The straightest thing common to all of them is me. It is my way of writing and putting things together which provides some coherence to this bunch. The thirteen pieces here constitute about a third of my corpus of academic articles written since 1984. This particular culling is based on a number of factors which relate to my trajectory as an academic, and to some of the subjects and sources pertaining to the Indian past and its modern recovery that have fascinated me. So, let me weave some of that personal history into the fabric of this collection.

When I began my teaching and research career in 1981, I was 21. A privilege, a very great one in hindsight, fell to my lot: Professor Dilip Chakrabarti, who taught archaeology at the Department of History in the University of Delhi, began to guide me. DKC, as he is usually called, was a tough taskmaster who never supervised research to win a popularity contest but only to train his students, so there was much scolding and some cajoling—the latter when it seemed apparent that the former might prove counterproductive.

But the end result was that DKC inculcated in his students, through his own formidable writings and across his office table, the desire to produce quality written work and publish in journals of outstanding pedigree. These I would read in libraries or elsewhere, wherever I could find the published works of scholars that I admired. For that supervision and example, grateful appreciation seems wholly insufficient: this book is dedicated to DKC, and even then it is only part recompense.

Publishing in reputed journals and making presentations at international conferences is part of the trajectory of seasoned academics and this was true of my work as well. I now know that this was both empowering and limiting. Seeing something I'd authored in journals—in which I'd earlier read the works of admired others—never failed to thrill me to bits, in part because it so gratifyingly embellished my curriculum vitae. It seemed a great pity, therefore, that such journals and conference proceedings had a very limited circulation in India, since that meant a big chunk of my work was not going to be read as widely in my own country as I would have wanted. This is the reason why the bulk of the papers I have selected for inclusion here are those that have not been easily accessible in India. Apart from introducing a degree of uniformity in the system of citation, pruning the titles of the original publications, and removing some glaring errors of fact and the odd phrase—including the royal 'we' that I initially used in imitation of the much used tone of Indian scholars—the essays more or less retain their original format. Themes recur which make for some repetition, but the thought springs conveniently to mind that these repetitions may in fact have an argument in their favour—they link the essays unexpectedly to each other, a virtue quite lacking when they were forlornly singular and uncollected.

What I wrote in academic journals, on many occasions, began outside the cloistered solitude of academia, in the course of pleasant wanderings around all kinds of places, monuments, and museums. Some of the research on John Marshall's early years in Simla, for instance, happened during the summer of 1997 when my husband and son had to spend part of their summer holiday searching out

with me the buildings that housed Marshall and his office establishment. Again, my essay on the history of the 1857 landscape owes much to various visits that I made to the monuments of old Delhi with my son in tow, sharing my attachment to them with him. During those excursions it was his questions and comments that made me realize important facets that then crept into what I was writing: for example, the fact that while the British conquest had created a landscape of imperial sacrifice and bravery, the Indian perspective by contrast—thousands of citizens dead fighting the British or hanged on charges of treason and sedition—was practically invisible in the city. In much the same way, my exploration of the partitioning of India's past in 1947 began in New Delhi's National Museum, which houses an excellent collection of artefacts and antiquities from Harappa and Mohenjodaro. It was a collection I frequently looked at, especially whenever I needed a break from the archives in the head office of the Archaeological Survey of India (which stands next to the Museum, a place of wondrous discovery in its own right where I spent years digging out the little-known story of the Indus cities: Lahiri 2005).

Speaking of the Indus cities, ever since I can remember there has been this idea that India lost its Indus heritage in 1947 because practically all the Indus sites fell within the national boundaries of Pakistan. This notion of cataclysmic loss seems to have been drilled into the minds of every student of ancient Indian history, giving credence to the view that nationalism influences understandings of the past. Then, one day, while admiring the Indus collection of the Museum, a question suddenly popped up in my head. How had India, in spite of that loss, managed to retain such a large collection from those cartographically sundered cities? It was in search of an answer to that question that I started sifting through the 1940s files of the Survey.

Mohenjodaro and Harappa inevitably conjure up in my mind's eye an image of the archaeologist John Marshall who put together the pieces of the puzzle that had emerged from the excavations of those cities, the man who in 1924 first announced the discovery of the long-forgotten Indus civilization. The title of the present

volume, *Marshalling the Past,* plays on that connection and links many of these essays. The word 'marshalling' suggests things logically arranged, and I hope the intended coherence is visible in the three thematic sections into which I have marshalled the essays.

More than its connection with the idea of individual essays as wayward horses in need of corralling, however, 'marshalling' forms part of the title because my publisher pointed out that the character who constantly makes an appearance in them is John Marshall. A set of essays (nos. 10–12) teases out the circumstances of Marshall's appointment and the contours of his early years as director general of the Archaeological Survey of India; in some, he figures among the dramatis personae (nos. 1 and 2); in others, his definitive volumes on the excavations at Mohenjodaro are used to understand, on the one hand, the character of trade and the size of cities in Harappan times (nos. 6–7) and, on the other, the impact of Independence and Partition on museum collections and the nature of research on the Indus civilization (no. 5). His importance to me is personal as well: he was responsible for the beginning of my love affair with the archives. In 1996 I came upon some unknown documents connected with him (see no. 10), and since then the excitement involved in the recovery and resolution of little-known puzzles, people, and places in dusty files and memos has continued to grip me. Not surprisingly, eight of the essays in this volume use archival documents.

Much of the past marshalled here, thus, began with my discovery of Marshall memoranda.

Ancient Heritage and Modern Histories

What is the ancient heritage that forms the subject of the first five essays here? At the outset, let me explain my use of the term 'ancient'. The word is used here, on the one hand, to describe monuments and antiquities which, in many instances—as in the case of the Sanchi group of monuments (no. 2), the Mahabodhi temple (no. 3), and the antiquities of the Indus civilization (no. 5)—are actually so, in that they are products of the time-span

that historians accept as ancient (which stretches roughly from the earliest times till the sixth century AD). This, though, does not imply that their histories are confined to those times. So, for example, the monuments at Sanchi and Mahabodhi are not merely ancient, for the renovations and elaborations there go well beyond the ancient period into the early medieval. On the other hand, the section discussing these monuments also includes an essay which intrudes into medieval terrain—that of the Mughal monuments of Delhi, with no ancient relics at all (no. 4). In other words, I have stretched the term 'ancient' to include all vestiges of premodern antiquity.

As a teacher of Indian history I am all too aware of the squabbles that the periodization of Indian history has spawned, and the bad mouthing that I have encountered in that historiography made me hesitant about taking this liberty. I hope, however, that the elasticity in my use of the label 'ancient' is of little consequence since I am not concerned with monuments and artefacts only as a kind of archive of ancient human activity. Instead, I investigate aspects that relate to the modern histories of these architectural and archaeological relics. So these essays all connect with the modern pasts of premodern sites and objects, analysing the many ways in which the conceptions, contradictions, and conflicts of modern India came to mark their documentation and conservation.

Even while there are variations in the contexts and characters that figure in each essay, what now seems evident to me is that there are elements which give coherence to my exploration of the modern histories of these relics. Each essay illustrates the ways in which political power has been integral to the conservation and destruction of monuments and antiquities in India. In the period of British rule, colonization of large parts of the subcontinent provided the rulers an imperial—or, more correctly, imperious—right to turn subcontinental archaeological sites into a kind of hunting ground for trophies. The objects that were removed—the standard colonial euphemism for purloined—by all kinds of officials ranged from architectural remains, like prayer niches and stupas, to images that were worshipped. In fact, part of the identity back in England

of a 'colony-returned' gentleman was the collection of artefacts he brought as mementos of his Indian experience.

There were instances—as with the *pietra dura* panels in the Red Fort at Delhi that were looted by a Captain John Jones in the aftermath of the 1857 revolt—when collections of antiquities formed part of what was plundered in the process of pacifying 'natives'. Such pacification also involved, as the fourth essay documents, the systematic desacralization of historic structures which were seen to be symbols of resistance in the arena of revolt. There were other instances—most notably with Alexander Cunningham who became the first director general of the Archaeological Survey in 1871—where personal collections were the consequence of exploration and excavation. The relics which he amassed were integral to Cunningham's vision of himself, this fact being beautifully frozen by the official photograph of him that lies now in the Archaeological Survey photographic library (Fig. 1.1). Rather than appear as the explorer par excellence that he was, with perhaps an archaeological landscape providing a backdrop, Cunningham chose to be photographed as a collector would be, surrounded by all kinds of statuary and reliquaries.

Politics was equally central, even if less visible in the archaeological conservation undertaken from the late nineteenth century. Curzon's conservation agenda is an example of this. The viceroy got scores of government offices and soldiers ejected from Mughal monuments (which he described as the sort of colonial desecration 'from which even a Goth would have shrunk') in the hope of providing a more enlightened and cultured face to British rule in India. Curzon, in fact, provides a fine example of how, with political will, all kinds of protective measures can be pushed through. Simultaneously, though, on account of the presumption of superiority that accompanies benevolence, the act of repairing monuments made Curzon believe that the state had acquired certain rights over them, including the right to superintend worship at religious sites that had been restored. As he put it, when discussing mosques that were to be handed back to Muslims, 'having saved them from the destructive carelessness or the uncultured neglect of white men,

we were not going to hand them back to the dirt and defilement of Asiatic religious practices.' To compound the offence, the proper conduct of worship at historic shrines was frequently defined by the British not in keeping with forms of worship that had long been customary but with reference to ancient religious texts and the notion that religious places were exclusively Hindu or Buddhist or Islamic. This was a political attitude which created enormous problems, especially in sacred complexes like Mahabodhi which had, over the centuries, enjoyed the worship of people of various faiths—as the third essay in this collection shows.

The final essay carries forward to 1947 the theme of contests over material culture spawned by political developments. At Partition, Islamic monuments in several parts of India were under siege. Usually, those laying siege are seen as mobs and looters. What I have recovered from the Archaeological Survey archives reveals that there were also other factors, such as callous acts of omission and commission by princely states such as Alwar and Bharatpur on the one hand, and various limbs of the Government of India on the other. On museum collections and antiquities, other sorts of pressure had come into being. Such collections had finally to be divided between the two new nations, after many rounds of tortuous negotiations, sometimes right down the middle. What perhaps most poignantly captures this is the fate of certain unique objects from Mohenjodaro and Taxila where, in searching for an equitable solution, the chief anxiety was to bureaucratically adhere to a strict arithmetic. Thus, when a unique necklace was the subject of negotiation, India and Pakistan got an equal number of terminal beads, spacers, and other such ornamental paraphernalia. Tragically sacrificed in the negotiations between India and Pakistan was the principle of preserving the integrity of the antiquities.

Just as these essays are connected by a common thread—the political imprint which marks the modern histories of old monuments and artefacts—they also draw attention to occasions of resistance. This is worth reiterating, since the idea of the colonial state often evokes the image of a hegemonic, all-powerful entity. On the ground, however, Indian subjects sometimes strongly

positioned themselves against the government. This often happened when they believed the state was either vandalizing religious places through its archaeological practices or keeping out caretakers and proprietors from such places because of their personal religious beliefs. The Neelichhatri temple agitation in Delhi (discussed in essay 1), which drew people across community lines, succeeded in stopping the Archaeological Survey from dismantling rare Mughal tiles on the roof of the temple. At Mahabodhi, it was a religious figure, the mahant of the *math* there, who refused to allow the shrine to be made exclusively Buddhist, as Curzon had hoped (essay 3). He pointed to shrines in Ajmer, Darjeeling, and Nepal where, as at Mahabodhi, people of various faiths worshipped 'without the least friction'. Among the characters who took this line of reasoning, my favourite is Sultan Jahan Begum, heroine of the second essay. The last in a dynasty of women rulers of the princely state of Bhopal, she refused to be intimidated by British notions of how she should protect the Buddhist monuments of Sanchi. As it is, stories about Indian monuments in which the central character is a woman ruler are rare. What is singular about this ruler's engagement with Sanchi is not merely that her patronage made possible the impressive architectural conservation undertaken there, but that she successfully demonstrated to the British that personal faith was irrelevant to the conservation of an often composite heritage.

If the case of Sanchi dramatically demonstrates that the colonials did not always have it their own way when upkeep and guardianship became issues, another thread stitching these essays is the evidence that imperial policy itself was marked by fluctuations and flexibility. The fluctuations that the Sanchi essay explores in the relationship of the Begum of Bhopal and John Marshall make this obvious. Marshall's interaction with Sultan Jahan began on a sour note because she refused to agree with his proposal for caretaker arrangements at Sanchi. Had she allowed him to have his way, 'devoted hands', those of Buddhists, would have been hired to replace the Muslim watchmen there. Yet, many years later, the Begum became Marshall's main benefactor: the cost of the conservation work, the generous honorarium to his collaborator Alfred Foucher,

the construction of the Sanchi museum, and the publication of Marshall's work on Sanchi were entirely financed by the Bhopal Darbar. Not surprisingly the archaeologist, who had initially viewed her with deep suspicion, now chose to publicly acknowledge her. His Sanchi volumes are dedicated to the memory of 'Her Highness Nawab Sultan Jehan Begam Sahiba, Late Ruler of Bhopal'.

The revolt of 1857 in Delhi and its afterlife there reveal shifts in British policy even more startling, and these can be linked to the changing political circumstances of colonial rule. The recovery of Delhi saw the British follow the example of medieval invaders inasmuch as they treated the whole city as spoils of war. The sack of the city which ensued was accompanied by alterations in the usage of royal buildings and mosques, as also systematic demolitions of many. However, some twenty years after the revolt, when Queen Victoria's imperial assemblage was held in Delhi to celebrate the addition of the title 'Empress of India' to her name, Lord Lytton thought it politic to make specific announcements aimed at 'undoing' the damage that had been inflicted on Muslim sentiment in 1857. This resulted, among other things, in reopening some of the major mosques for public worship. Later, the Coronation Darbar which Curzon presided over in 1903—now to mark the coronation of Edward VII as Emperor of India—further reconstituted the 1857 legacy by comprehensively repairing historic structures within the walled city. None of this implies that the Raj's policies in relation to monuments were not ideologically motivated. Such examples merely highlight the fact that its institutional practices were not always rigid but could be guided by pragmatic considerations.

Artefacts and Landscapes

The main concern of the four essays in the book's second section is to study specific aspects of the past—artefacts, archaeological sites, and landscapes—in such diverse areas and time frames as Punjab, Sindh, and Gujarat in Harappan times, and Ballabgarh on the southern outskirts of Delhi in the medieval centuries. The essays

in this section were written before those in the first, and were published between 1990 and 1998. Looking at them more than a decade (and in the case of the first essay, two decades) later, they reveal to me a twofold interest in archaeological data. Two (nos. 6 and 7) examine artefacts, such as objects found in excavations at Harappa and at other sites of the Indus civilization, in order to reconstruct and interpret the trading patterns of the ancient cities of that civilization and their population sizes. Two others (nos. 8 and 9) also examine artefacts and sites but use the data to look at what people thought and at how the imprint of their cultural choices and belief systems can be investigated through archaeology.

The essay on Harappa (no. 6) uses the methodology of my PhD dissertation on the archaeology of Indian trade routes in order to understand the areas from where, and the networks through which, the city of Harappa accessed a range of resources. From the mid-1980s, for practically half a decade, I lived and breathed trade routes, looking at how lines of communication in the Indian subcontinent could be explored. The Indus civilization was particularly challenging because written records, which could have indicated the commodities that were traded, remain undeciphered. So it was primarily through the archaeological record—the raw materials that were used for manufacturing a variety of objects, from humble tools to exquisite jewellery, and the probable source areas of those raw materials—that the connections over diverse areas were determined. While that thesis appeared as a book (Lahiri 1992), the essay reproduced here was the result of an invitation from the distinguished historian Sumit Guha to write for *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, of whose editorial board he was then a member.

My analysis here of Harappa's resource-use, resource-access, and lines of communication was not derived from the range of science-based methods that allow for a precise characterization of raw materials. Yet the argument it made about the diverse sources from which this city procured the minerals and metals that it used has since been supported by characterization studies. For instance, the wide-ranging scientific analysis of Harappa's rock and mineral

assemblage by Randall Law cited this Harappa paper while concurring with its 'assessment' (1990: 441) that while 'there may have been raw materials involved in the long-distance trade between the Indus Valley, the Persian Gulf, Iran and Mesopotamia there is no reason to argue that Harappa or any other site of the Indus civilization were in any way solely or even significantly dependent on such raw materials. Harappans would have found multiple occurrences of practically every rock and mineral resource they required in abundance within or directly adjacent to the Greater Indus region' (Law 2011: 484). Since 1924, when the discovery of the Indus civilization was announced, the primary focus of studies on Harappan trade has been on its contacts with contemporary cultures and civilizations to its west and north-west. Certainly, the Indus people were trade savvy, but it always appeared unlikely that they would procure raw materials primarily from the west while ignoring the presence of those very raw materials within their own distribution zone or in the territories of other subcontinental cultures with whom they exchanged a range of commodities. My findings revealed that the importance attached to the areas west of Baluchistan as source areas of raw materials for the Indus civilization was entirely misplaced, a conclusion which remains as valid today as in 1990.

Like trade, the essay on population estimates of Harappan settlements (no. 7) is entirely based on the evidence of archaeology, in this case the evidence relating to size and scale. Since this was originally presented at a conference where I happened to be the only archaeologist, it has been written in an 'archaeologist among the historians' mode, carefully explaining how South Asian archaeology has studied ancient population groups, as also the range of techniques it has used to arrive at population estimates.

South Asian demographic archaeology owes much to anthropologists, statisticians, and historians whose methods, along with those used by archaeologists (inasmuch as they pertained to ancient India), are reviewed in the essay. So, for instance, in archaeological writings, population has generally been estimated on the basis of the size of the archaeological settlement or habitational mound,

with the number of persons there being determined on the basis of the relevant ethnohistorical evidence. This is critically focussed upon in my essay. The chief reason for such a focus is that ethnohistorical evidence has usually come in the form of analogies derived from documentary sources which frequently mention the covered area of premodern cities and settlements, as also the number of citizens they housed. Based on the per acre or per hectare calculation of population density at such places, the number of persons who inhabited all kinds of ancient settlements, including the Harappan cities, have been arrived at. My essay, however, demonstrates that if one searches for a workable modern 'ethnohistorical' index from the geographical area which coincides with the distribution zone of the Harappan civilization, the variability is wide enough to discredit any average figure drawn from such evidence. Instead, a more reliable method was one based on the specific archaeological characteristics of the settlement in question, ranging from the nature and size of public spaces and residential areas to details derived from the houses there. Using this approach, the essay offered estimates for the population of Mohenjodaro and Lothal. While the figures I proposed may in retrospect seem somewhat conservative, the method suggested—converting archaeological data on settlement space into population figures—still seems a more reliable one.

Meanwhile, by the time this essay was written, other kinds of questions had begun to absorb me. They too were about artefacts and sites, but I now wanted to understand how features associated with them could be used to investigate ways of thinking and cultural choices. Since this was, for me, uncharted terrain, I was the wary traveller hesitant to set forth, but eventually my curiosity to cull out clues about cognitive patterns from archaeological data proved the journey worthwhile. The same interest is reflected in the other two essays which make up this section: hard archaeological data are interrogated to highlight elements of cultural practice.

Early Indian cultures (no. 8) are marked by a strong preference for pure copper artefacts, as also the presence of alloyed objects which show a striking variation in their elemental composition.

These have been described as 'discrepant' features resulting from a deficiency of alloying metals, on the one hand, and as reflecting the limitations of craftspersonship, on the other. In the first case, I was uncomfortable with the argument that the presence of pure copper objects could be explained away as being related to a scarcity of alloying metals in the Indian subcontinent. This is not merely because such metals are not as scarce as they were made out to be, but also because the production of pure copper artefacts remained constant from the third millennium BC till the early centuries AD. Eventually, while researching a book on copper and its alloys in ancient India (coauthored with DKC: Chakrabarti and Lahiri 1996), a more meaningful explanation of this ancient phenomenon emerged, in large part out of a reading of the ethnographic literature, especially Meera Mukherjee's superb *Metalcraftsmen of India* (1978). This monograph revealed to me that among traditional craftspersons—whom she extensively documented—pure copper crafting was privileged over the general trade of copper alloy manufacture. Following her lead, I examined ancient texts and other sources to argue that, perhaps, an alternative explanation was possible for the continuous presence of copper objects of high purity in ancient India, one which connected with ancient cultural preferences.

In the case of early alloyed artefacts of copper that were compositionally variant (where the percentages of alloying metals like tin could vary a great deal even within the repertoire of objects found at one site), it was again Mukherjee's documentation that helped provide an answer. This was an answer different from explanations which saw such variations as a reflection of the poor alloying skills of ancient craftspeople. Instead, as her work revealed, there existed in India a widespread use of old, broken, and scrap metal. That this tradition of recycling metal is an old practice was evident to me from what was recorded in Buddhist Jatakas, as also in the metalworking areas of early sites. In situations where metal is so recycled, discrepancies in the composition of artefacts were only to be expected, since the proportion of different elements could not be controlled except in a most general way. In this way, it

became possible to demonstrate that an ecologically sound artisanal practice of recycling metal in early India was likely to produce compositionally variant artefacts.

If this article highlighted the idea that archaeological analyses of metallurgical minutiae suffered on account of the lack of interface with texts, ancient and ethnographic, the final essay in this section, in contradistinction, shows the inadequacy of textual sources—in this case, for understanding the religious geography of Ballabgarh. Sharing its northern border with Delhi, Ballabgarh in Haryana was an area that I knew intimately. I had, along with my friend and colleague Upinder Singh, and a former student, Tarika Uberoi, spent a great deal of time on fieldwork there, looking at mounds, monuments, scatters of artefactual debris, and sculptural elements that can be seen in and around its numerous villages and urban localities (Lahiri, Singh, and Uberoi 1996). The primary focus of that survey was the reconstruction of the area's early settlement history through a grassroots village-to-village documentation. At the same time, the field visits opened up an entire universe of medieval worship and belief there, one that could neither be adequately reconstructed nor explained by using texts.

It was also in Ballabgarh that I first observed the widespread worship of broken sculpture. While such vestiges form the only evidence for the existence of early medieval Hindu and Jain temples there, equally significant was that these archaeological remnants of ancient 'high culture' survived as a body of historical 'evidence' because they had been preserved in a dramatically visible way by folk worship. Such worship showed how little scriptural sanctions strictly forbidding homage to broken and mutilated images mattered on the ground. Texts like the *Pratimanalakshanam*, dealing with the creation and installation of images, specifically warn worshippers that 'the image of a deity, if it be burnt, worn out, broken or split up, after its establishment or at the time of its enshrinement, will always be harmful. A burnt image brings forth drought, a worn-out one causes loss of wealth, a broken image forebodes death in the family, while one that is split up, war.' Unmindful of such proscription, broken images were placed on village shrines meant to promote habitational bounty.

Reading this essay today, there are unnecessarily argumentative sentences and paragraphs there that I don't think I would write now, but they seemed right at that point in time. Actually, my own education had simply not prepared me for the disjunction that I encountered between notions of religious space in the textual tradition and the constitution of sacred geography on the ground. My field area, and the various people I met in Ballabgarh, opened a window that helped somewhat in making up for the deficiencies in my education. Drawing attention to the rich diversity within Ballabgarh's religious geography thus became an opportunity for me to highlight limitations in the vision of text-based religious history of the sort that formed the staple of what I had been taught, a perspective which practically made such diversity invisible.

Although I did not do so then, I must mention now that my ideas about religious phenomena were also blinkered. I was at the time fairly familiar with a range of early archaeological writings, but in them I had simply not noticed the presence of such practices. For instance, the survey reports of Alexander Cunningham had recorded the collection and worship of artefacts and old sculptural relics around religious shrines and trees in all kinds of places, from Nalanda in Bihar to Harappa in Punjab. It is another matter that the significance of what he chanced upon in such places escaped him; that they had escaped my notice is what seems odd now. Evidently, in the 1980s, my mind was too full of the task of configuring communication and commerce out of all kinds of ancient artefacts and objects. In the process, I had failed to notice allusions in nineteenth-century literature to practices of the kind that would surprise and delight me in my wanderings around Ballabgarh in the early 1990s.

The experience of observing community practices—mainly rooted in religion—in rural Ballabgarh within which objects of antiquarian interest are preserved also altered my ideas about modes and methods of heritage conservation. From the perspective of antiquarianism, what seems so striking is that, by integrating them in their shrines and mythologies, villagers conserve ancient artefacts and antiquities. This is an excellent and, if I may say so, 'non-Western' conservation practice which has also ensured the

preservation of artefacts and sculpture close to their original contexts. This is not to suggest that destruction of sites and sculpture does not take place in rural India, but only to underline that those images and antiquities which are perceived through, and incorporated into, a filter of local beliefs and practices are more likely to be preserved.

An Archaeologist and a Historian

Reconstructing the past is not simply an empirical exercise involving the examining of mounds and monuments, blades and beads, shrines and sculpture—all the litter that litters the pages of this book. (Indeed, I am tempted here to coin what should be the archaeologist's axiom: 'All that litters is not gold!') It also involves the ideas and interpretations of individual scholars whose works are grounded in their own personal and intellectual experiences, and in the institutional frameworks within which they practised their craft. This is the theme that binds the essays in the third section.

Here, I examine the life and work of two individuals best remembered for their contributions to the history of ancient India, the archaeologist I consider I befriended through my work, John Marshall; and the historian who was by most considered too awesome to befriend, D.D. Kosambi. They are also separated in terms of the circumstances of their lives: one a British-born colonial who trained as an archaeologist and headed the Archaeological Survey of India, the other an Indian historian who sustained his interest in history even while he pursued a mainstream career in mathematics. What connects them here is that a constellation of similar elements, ranging from their education and training to the professional and personal preoccupations of their lives, are shown to resonate in their writings and work.

Unlike my essay on Kosambi, which looks at a range of writings penned by that historian across several decades (no. 13), the three essays devoted to Marshall deal essentially with his early years in India. In contrast to his illustrious predecessors—Alexander

Cunningham and James Burgess, who had researched and written extensively on ancient India before they occupied the office of the director general of the Archaeological Survey—Marshall arrived in India after he got that job. He was then 25 years old, a scholar with a Cambridge classical and archaeological education but no training in Indology. His early years help us understand the circumstances and events that brought him to India, and how he came to grips with the Indian past.

Marshall's education and training, as the first essay reveals, was impeccable. Yet, looking at the memos and minutes on his appointment that lie in the archives of the British Library, one should actually pay tribute to Curzon, who made this possible (no. 10). As Viceroy of India, Curzon first used his position to revive the post of director general, which had lapsed in 1899. Then he ensured that, instead of Oriental scholarship and age, youth (so that the man chosen had the 'capacity and energy and power of work') and a record of distinguished scholarship at one of the English universities became the criteria for choosing from among candidates. Once Marshall came to India, Curzon carefully watched over and guided his young protégé to optimize the rescue from vandalism and vegetation of India's monuments. The basic structure of archaeological policy laid down in those years was to remain in place for a long time to come and this was, in large measure, something Curzon himself ensured almost as the last thing he ever did in India. It is no exaggeration to say that India had not had a ruler, and has not since—including all the prime ministers of India since 1947—who has remotely matched Curzon's devotion to the restoration of India's architectural heritage.

But to come back to Curzon's protégé: how did he settle down to his new duties? Since Marshall's is an institutional life, his teething years reveal how he evolved along with the organization he headed (nos. 11 and 12). Today, the head office of the Archaeological Survey of India in New Delhi is a large organizational set-up with more than a dozen directors, each with their own support staff, who are responsible for monuments, antiquities, publications, exploration, excavation, and a great deal else. The distance travelled

since 1902, when Marshall began the process of establishing the director general's office in Simla, is considerable, and the enormously rich archives of that organization make it possible to grasp this in very human terms.

The director general's office began in a small-scale and unremarkable way, from two rooms in a house that Marshall rented for his residence, and with a support staff that could be counted on the fingers of one hand. When he sought an expansion in the number of clerks, he was asked to provide statistics on the letters his office received and dispatched on a monthly basis! If there was an element of tentativeness in Marshall's manner of organizing his office, positive initiative was taken where it mattered most—as, for example, in beginning the process of setting up an archaeological library attached to his establishment. Having set it up, he took a personal interest in ordering special sets and publications. After digging into the dusty files of his office, I realized that many of the British Museum volumes and series of journals of the Royal Asiatic societies of London and Bombay that I consulted on numerous occasions in that library owe their presence to Marshall's initiative. Not surprisingly, given Marshall's supervision, it soon became the most famed archaeological library of India.

The other signposts of an intellectual kind worth mentioning relate to the glimmerings in those early years of the many important excavations, conservation projects, and discoveries that Marshall would undertake and preside over in his later years. Sanchi is one of them, and an excellent photographic documentation of it by Henry Cousens would be extensively used by Marshall when he published *The Monuments of Sanchi* (1940). Not many, however, are aware that it was James Burgess who in 1901 had first drawn Marshall's attention to these monuments. Again, Taxila, where he began excavations in 1913 and which he continued for nearly two decades, had captured his imagination shortly after he arrived in India. But, in retrospect, of all those early sightings the most significant were the Harappa seals which Marshall first saw in the British Museum before he came to India. He later mentioned that they had interested him, and during his early years in India artefacts

that were even older than those seals were discovered. These, Marshall realized, were then unrepresented in the existing narratives of ancient India. It is another matter that it would be years before he followed up those exciting clues which, along with later and equally wonderful discoveries, would lead to the discovery of the Indus civilization—a story I have told at length in *Finding Forgotten Cities* (2005).

If one of the ideas that emerges strongly in that book, as also in the Marshall essays here, is that ways of seeing have much to do with the life histories of individuals and their intellectual grids, this is central to the last essay of this collection, on the life and work of D.D. Kosambi (no. 13). This was a scholar whose admiration for Marxism was matched by his passion for the history of ancient India. The defining tag of Marxist historian, though, that has come to be attached to him, has in some ways diminished an appreciation of the unusual mix of literary and other qualities in his writings, which I have tried to explore.

I was not aware, before I wrote the essay, that Kosambi's first and subsequently last foray into history were in the form of short fictional stories. The first such, entitled 'The Kanpur Road', used the 1857 rebellion as a backdrop. The last thing he ever wrote, 'The Hump on Nandi's Back', was woven around prehistory. Kosambi's literary interests were also integral to what he sought out in the writings of ancient Indian litterateurs. The grammarian Bhartrhari, for example, he compared with the German Goethe and the Persian Sa'di, and while many of those comparisons appear far-fetched, they demonstrate the range of Kosambi's reading and the ways in which he could use his thoughts on ancient India to show his deep appreciation of Western literature. Above all, rereading Kosambi revealed to me that a great deal about his life experiences could be extracted from his work. Compared to Marshall, whose ruminations and reflections have largely been excavated out of the archives, what distinguishes the historian Kosambi from him, as also from many of his contemporaries, is that he wrote deliberately in a way that gives us a glimpse of Kosambi the man. Chunks of his life—from Goa where he was

born and grew up, moving on to prolific literary interests honed at Harvard, and then his career as a mathematician even as he spent much of that working life asking questions about India's past—these all figure in his writings.

The process of learning about the careers of such scholars has shown me that, like ancient India, its modern historians and archaeologists merit ethnographic study. I would like to think that I will write about many more scholars and the ways in which their ideas about the Indian past are rooted in their personal experiences.

But that may depend upon whether readers approve of the essays in this collection.

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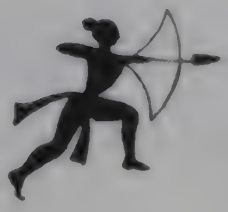
PART I



Ancient Heritage and Modern Histories

1

Archaeology and Identity in Colonial India

Introduction

'HOW IS IT THAT YOUR COUNTRYMEN STEAL OUR GODS?' asked a Brahmin of the Baptist missionary John Chamberlain, who noted the details of this conversation in his diary on 20 November 1817 (Davis 1997: 164):

> Sir, a gentleman whose name I do not remember, came to me to let him take the image of Lukshmee away, which stood on the point where the river and rivulet meet; and he said he would give me a sum of money if I could consent to it. I told him that I could not take any money for it; that she was worshipped by all the people around, and that several times a year the people assembled from the country at a distance to see the goddess, and to bathe: at which time much was offered to her. The gentleman persisted. He returned four or five times, offered ample remuneration and even took the brahmin by boat to see the assemblage of gods in his Calcutta house, but still the brahmin refused to sell. Finally, the gentleman got his people together, and took away the goddess by night. There the tree stands, Sir, but the goddess is gone!

Originally published in 2000 as 'Archaeology and Identity in Colonial India', in *Antiquity*, 74 (285): 687–92.

This story, about an Indian priest and a British military officer and antiquarian Charles Stuart (1757–1828), is a useful starting point for a discourse on the theme of archaeology and identity in colonial India on two counts (Fisch 1985). First, it is illustrative of processes that were an integral part of the colonization of India—the acquisition, control, and attempt to alter existing structures—either through peaceful means, when 'ample remuneration' was offered, or by force or deception, when 'the gentleman got his people together, and took away the goddess by night'. Secondly, it reminds us that modern interest in the material paraphernalia of India's past coincided with and, in many cases, manifested itself in situations of domination and conquest. This requires emphasis since much of the literature on the history of the discipline has treated its evolution in terms of the development of a neutral, scientific enterprise, detached from the imperial process and its politics. In sharp contrast, this essay assumes that the evolution of Indian archaeology cannot be discussed without referring to the circumstances in which this process unfolded, those of the creation and expansion of the British colonial state. Its central argument hinges on the radically different positions occupied by the 'colonizers' and the 'colonized' and the impact of this on the manner in which archaeology was used by each group to construct the 'other' and their own identities. To put it another way, while Charles Stuart, the subject of the above-quoted incident, has been seen by many as the most influential antiquarian of his time in the 'age of discovery' of India's material past, from the perspective of the devout worshippers, whose goddess was taken away, antiquarians and things archaeological could only have been the signifiers of an 'epoch of loss'.

Connecting Archaeology to Empire

The affiliations of archaeology with the British administration of India were close and influenced, at various levels, the ways in which different groups of people perceived it in relation to themselves and others. I shall highlight some of them, conceding in advance

that selectivity has to be exercised in an essay of this length. The first is that self-conscious, systematic surveys of sites and antiquities for the purpose of reconstructing India's historical past were intimately connected with the need of the British to gather and order information about their subjects in newly acquired territories. These surveys became part of the East India Company's system of governance and resource mapping under Wellesley (1798–1805), gaining in momentum after the capture of Sri Rangapattana in 1799, which practically completed the British conquest of India south of the Vindhya mountains. It was this political context, an unequal relationship of force, that allowed all kinds of British officials to treat subcontinental sites as an easy hunting ground for antiquities.

Alexander Cunningham (1814–93), one of the pioneers of Indian archaeology, is an example of this. He came to India as a military engineer and served as the first archaeological surveyor and subsequently as the first director general of the Archaeological Survey of India, from 1861 till 1885, with a gap between 1866 and 1870. That Cunningham regarded his field of interest as a mine which would provide trophies to be carried home is evident from his contract which allowed him a share in the antiquities that he discovered (Roy 1953: 10). Unfortunately, the bulk of his collection, which included a large number of Gandharan Buddhist sculptures (*c.* first to sixth centuries AD) from north-west India, was lost in 1887 in a shipwreck off the coast of Sri Lanka. Many other collections, however, found their way to Great Britain and such memorabilia also included parts of old buildings. One such case is a prayer niche at the Elgin Museum in north-east Scotland which originally formed the central *mihrab* in the Sona mosque at Firozpur in Gaur but was removed by Grant, of the Bengal Civil Service, around 1842 and subsequently presented to the museum of his native place (MacDonnell 1905). Clearly, part of the identity of a 'colony-returned' British gentleman was the collection of artefacts which he carried back as mementos of his Indian experience.

Moreover, since archaeology over a period of time (1861–70) was transformed into a permanent arm of the British Raj, its priorities in terms of research and conservation shifted backwards and

Fig. 1.1: General Sir Alexander Cunningham surrounded with Indian antiquities

forwards in relation to the needs and requirements of the empire. The discontinuance of Cunningham's field surveys in 1866 and the shift towards the documentation of Indian architecture and art remains illustrates the connection. This was at the instance of the Lords of the Committee of the Council of Education in England who required that photographs, plaster casts, and accurate measurements of India's ancient buildings be sent to England

(Despatch 1867). This, in turn, is intimately connected to the movement for the reformation of industrial design in England, which several reformist designers—Gottfried Semper, Owen Jones, and Henry Cole, among others—believed would be accelerated through inputs from traditional Indian ornamental design (Mitter 1977: 221). The archaeological documentation undertaken in India from 1866 until 1870 was related to this concern. The visual invocation of India's material past, it was hoped, would prove to be instrumental in improving the inferior and uninspiring standards of design at home. Similarly, Lord Curzon, viceroy between 1899 and 1905, developed an agenda regarding India's historic architecture. Apart from his own deep interest in monuments, this was shaped by the social context in England and by the need to make imperial governance appear more 'enlightened'. Historic buildings that had been pillaged or converted into dingy, government spaces, such as those in the forts at Delhi, Lahore, and Agra which had been built in the heyday of the Mughal empire (1526–1700), were encountered by Curzon across much of India and proved to be an embarrassing reminder of 'a century of British vandalism and crime'. Thus, their restoration came to be perceived as an urgent, necessary step in promoting a more cultured image of colonial rule (Lahiri 1998: 10).

The anxiety to forge such an identity even led, in one instance, to the return of cultural plunder. These were the *pietra dura* panels in the Red Fort at Delhi, constructed by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in the seventeenth century AD. These panels were looted by a certain Captain Jones during the revolt of 1857 and sold to the British government for £500. Today, they form the backdrop to Shah Jahan's throne, having found their way back to India because of Curzon's initiative. This coincided with a special occasion, the 1903 Delhi coronation of Edward VII, so that 'the background of the throne should represent to assembled spectators, by a careful restoration to its original condition, not the vandalism of an earlier generation, but the generous enlightenment of a later and more cultured age' (Curzon 1902). One must remember, too, that if one of the objectives of monument conservation was

dismantling signs of colonial violence so as to lend credence to the construction of a beneficent imperial identity, a related concern was that of immortalizing the British presence as one that had suffered much at the hands of 'native' violence. This concern is evident in the repairs undertaken by the Archaeological Survey at the Residency and Alambagh in Lucknow. These were meant to preserve, as far as possible, the damage that they had suffered during the revolt of 1857. As John Marshall (1908), director general of archaeology in India, put it: 'there is little interest or value attaching to the architecture of any of these buildings, but a great deal attaching to their historical associations, and these associations are largely destroyed when all evidence of the damage sustained in the Mutiny has been effaced.'

Finally, an enduring image, at the heart of many archaeological tracts penned by British scholars of colonial India, was of themselves as the resurrectors of India's past, and the sharp contrast between them and the inhabitants of India. *The Bhilsa Topes* by General Cunningham, containing the results of his survey of Buddhist sites in the Vidisa region of Central India, is a typical example. That British explorers held the keys to unlocking India's history shines through in the poem which forms the conclusion to this work (Cunningham 1854: 368):

> Nought but the Tope themselves remain to mock
> Time's ceaseless efforts; yet they proudly stand
> Silent and lasting up their parent rock,
> And still as cities under magic's wand:
> Till curious Saxons, from a distant land,
> Unlock'd the treasure of two thousand years.
> And the lone scene is peopled . . .

Yet a very different leitmotif was used by Cunningham for representing indigenous people. One encounters 'bigoted Musalmans', 'avaracious zamindars' (landlords), and destructively rancorous 'fiery Saivas' (devotees of the Hindu god Shiva), and they are all represented as vandals. This was a common enough metaphor in archaeological writings and one is reminded here of

James Fergusson's (1876: 53) description of the 'ruthless Moslim' [*sic*] and the 'careless Hindu' who were supposed to have thoroughly obliterated all traces of ancient cultures in the Ganga valley!

Two issues may be kept in mind as we attempt to interpret these discourses. One is that such stereotyping helped in justifying certain kinds of policies (Chakrabarti 1997: 111). For one thing, because the 'natives' were characterized as unworthy of their ancient material past, unlike the 'curious Saxons' who were discovering it, this provided a justification for the physical removal of structural remains and antiquities from their original settings. The second is that information concerning the interactions between Indians and British officers constantly challenges such stereotypes. For example, most of Jacob's recommendations for restoring the 'Tower of Fame', a fifteenth-century AD monument at Chittorgarh, were those that had already been proposed by the 'native' mason there (Jacob 1903). Again, the restoration of Mughal buildings in the Red Fort at Delhi was based upon a pre-1857 work penned by a 'native', Syed Ahmed Khan's *Athar al-Sanadid,* and translated from the original for John Marshall by another 'native'—his assistant Maulvi Nur Baksh (Marshall 1902). Representations of the irreducible differences between British researchers and Indian inhabitants are best viewed as ideological reformulations of a more general colonial stereotype in which Indians were characterized in terms of unchangeable essences which helped to confirm British power. More importantly, these could not be sustained at the practical level of archaeological research and conservation where the British relied upon local knowledge.

The Indian Perspective: Perceptions and Resistance

A useful entry point for addressing the question of indigenous identities would be India's living heritage (made up of religious shrines, family memorials, and ancestral forts) since this was the cultural ground where 'archaeology' and its resonances most deeply affected Indians. It is unlikely that archaeology was viewed as an

intellectual pursuit concerned with unravelling India's material past by the average Indian who happened to come in contact with its practitioners. Instead, archaeologists were generally regarded as persons who were part of the British sarkar or government. As Vogel (1902), an archaeological surveyor, noted: for the 'natives', 'Sahibs' are 'identical to the Sarkar'. This was with good reason since the actual work of conservation and the procurement of antiquities was, on the advice of officers of the Archaeological Survey, executed by government engineers and local administrative officials. We can also see the way in which the world of monuments and artefacts was dovetailed with the domain of government from the fact that they were the agency to which various appeals concerning such issues were directed. The request, by a section of the Muslim community at Agra, for the restitution of Mubarak Manzil, a building that was apparently built by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1658–1707) (*The Observer* 1904); and the appeal by the Jain Digambar Prantik Sabha for custody of fifteenth-century AD Jaina images discovered in Rajputana (Jain Digambar Prantik Sabha 1903), are two such instances. At the same time, government machinery did not merely intervene when appeals like those mentioned above were directed towards it. On the contrary, religious structures of all kinds were documented, measured, studied, and conserved as a part of the general archaeological policy of the British Raj. Consequently, a very real fear came to be increasingly articulated about archaeological work being a government strategy for encroaching into the religious sphere. For instance, the *adhikaris* (caretakers) of the Radha Vallabh temple in Brindaban petitioned the government in 1902 asking whether the plans and photographs of the temple which were being prepared meant that the government wished to make a claim to its title or possession (Gale 1902).

That such fears were not entirely unfounded is evident from the case of the Mahabodhi temple in Bihar, which stands close to where Siddhartha Gautama, the historical founder of Buddhism, attained enlightenment. Between 1876 and 1884, the British government in India spent Rs 200,000 for the purpose of the architectural restoration of the temple complex. More importantly,

they believed that by thus repairing it they had acquired rights over the shrine. Curzon stated this with more candour than most when he said that the acts of restoration at Mahabodhi 'seem to involve the gradual assertion of a co-ordinate authority, with power, if not to dispose of the shrine or to expropriate the Mahanth, at least to superintend his superintendence and to control his control' (Lahiri 1999: 37). Shrine guardians and devotees, therefore, frequently regarded archaeological work as something that places of worship had to be protected from lest they altered existing rights. A good example of how this was done comes from the restorations undertaken in the first decade of the twentieth century at the Dilwara temples in Abu which were built in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries AD. In July 1904, Seth Lalbhai Dalpatbhai, acting president of the Jain Committee, in his discussion with the agent to the governor general of Rajputana, was categorical in stating that while the entire Jaina community was anxious to have their temples restored, and were most grateful for the counsel and advice of European officials, it was their express wish and desire that the work should be left entirely under their management and control, and should not be considered in any way government work. A system was thus evolved by which money was raised entirely by the community, while the Jain Committee controlled and managed the work of conservation. The Archaeological Survey and its officers were neither closely nor directly involved because the Jain Committee seemed to fear that the 'Government are trying to get the temples into their own hands, and that these repairs are the thin edge of the wedge' (Cousens 1905).

It is improbable that Indians perceived any distinction between antiquity collectors and archaeologists. Both took away antiquities, including objects of worship, and paid money for them. That several of the images which were removed to museums were under active worship is worth remembering. These ranged from Pala (*c.* eighth–twelfth centuries AD), Buddhist statues from Bishenpur in Bihar (Bloch 1904) to Kushana (*c.* first–third centuries AD) images from shrines in Mathura (Vogel 1908). At the same time, these cultural practices also resulted in occasions of resistance, and in circumstances where officers of the Archaeological Survey were

VANDALISM AT DELHI.

PUBLIC MEETING OF PROTEST.

HINDU-MAHOMEDAN RAPROCHMENT.

(*By Wire.*)

DELHI, May 1.

The Government wanted to remove the precious stones from the sacred Hindu Temple *Nili Chatri* of the times of *Pandavas* and *Kauravas* near Jumna. Yesterday there was a great indignation meeting held. Mohamedans also joined in large numbers. Mr. Shankernath, Barrister, explained how the stones were to be removed under the pretence of reparation, how the keepers of the Temple were determined upon not allowing removal. Mr. Hasan Nizami, a great Mahomedan religious leader, Maulvi Saad-ud-din Haider, Maulvi Fazil, Pleader, spoke very enthusiastically on behalf of the Mahomedans, promising that the Mussalmans would sign a memorial against this outrage on Hindu religion. The meeting resolved to submit a memorial against this outrage on Hindu religion. The Hindus also promised to sign a memorial against the unnecessary restrictions on the sale of meat passed by the Municipal Committee. Then Saiyid Haider Riza rose amidst deafening cheers and electrified the audience with his stirring speech. He said in the beginning that the Britishers professed to keep Indian religions intact because they wanted to conquer India and as now they stand unchallenged and have gained their object they were encroaching upon religions too. It is due to his personality and efforts that this complete union between Hindus and Mahommedans has been brought about in Delhi.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 1, 1907.

COMMENTS.

OFFICIAL VANDALISM AT DELHI.

A gross case of vandalism attempted to be perpetrated under official auspices is reported from the Imperial city of Delhi. The incidents described are so startling and passing strange that we would not have lent any credence to the story unless it came from a reliable source. Indeed the whole thing looks so plainly objectionable from start to finish that we have no desire to express ourselves strongly on the matter or to import any feelings into the discussion. For the sake of Mr. Humphreys the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi, and the other persons concerned themselves we hope a suitable explanation will be forthcoming, but in the meantime we must sadly confess that the incident discloses another instance of official failure to understand the people and to enter into their feelings. From what we are told it appears that some archæological savant expressed a wish to secure some 'blue tiles' as specimen of mosaic work of the times gone by, and the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi readily acceded to the request, little thinking what it meant to the people concerned whose cherished temple was the repository of the coveted relics of ancient art. As the work commenced, the Hindus got scent of it, and one of the leading Delhiwala, Mr. Shankar Nath, M.A., already well-known to our readers for his public spirit and energy, proceeded to the spot. Enquiries elicited little information, but from pillar to post the gentleman went until he was face to face with the Deputy Commissioner himself. There he learnt the bitter truth that the tiles of the temple were in requisition to adorn some Museum, or to complete the 'finds' in some archæological gallery.

Fig. 1.2: Reports from *The Tribune* on the Neelichhatri temple affair

required to consider themselves not simply as persons who treated places of worship as a means of enriching museum collections, but as representatives of a system that encroached upon the integrity of indigenous forms of worship. This is powerfully captured in the 1907 agitation around the Neelichhatri temple at Delhi. Its genesis can be traced to Marshall's desire to acquire rare Mughal tiles, 'green and yellow and red with a wonderful variety of designs—some of the finest perhaps that exist in India' (Marshall 1907)—which formed part of the roof of this small Hindu shrine. These, Marshall hoped, could be taken down and put as exhibits

in the Naubat Khana Museum. However, as the work of dismantling began, a spontaneous agitation broke out and eventually succeeded, through an appeal to Delhi's deputy commissioner, in getting the removal suspended. In this incident, the government was seen to be vandalizing religious structures through its archaeological practices, with resistant subjects positioned against such 'official vandalism'. Interestingly enough, here the 'colonized' do not appear as marginal voices but as people who, cutting across community lines, could successfully resist such incursions into their religious terrain. A final related point, though, may be made. This incident should not suggest that Indians appeared as defenders of their heritage only in situations of confrontation. We know from various British reports that historic structures of various kinds used to be repaired by 'native' rulers in their own states, and also through endowments by individuals and groups. The instances cited by Cole, curator of ancient monuments (1880–3), range from historic forts and palaces in the Rajputana states at one end of the spectrum and South Indian temples at the other (Curator 1882). One does not have the space here to go into detail, but the point is that the fate of structures with which the annals of their ancestry and their traditions were intermingled were a matter of concern for various groups of people. These, of course, were maintained through traditional systems of conservation, though local people, in such cases, did not use the language or concepts of archaeology as understood by us today. Yet, they were involved in preserving their material past or those parts of it that gave them a sense of identity, as good rulers and as devout worshippers.

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2

Sanchi: From Ruin to Restoration

Introduction

SANCHI FORMS THE LOCALE OF A FAMOUS GROUP OF Buddhist monuments in Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh. There are several impressive monuments there, clustered around an unremarkable whale-backed sandstone outlier of the Vindhyan hills, which are varied in their character and chronology. The hill itself is dominated by the 'great stupa' (tumulus or funerary mound), or Stupa 1, around which are memorial pillars, smaller stupas (of which Stupas 3 and 5 are most important), and shrines (chaityas). To the east and south of this central complex, there are a number of other imposing monuments, ranging from large and small monasteries (viharas) to an early medieval Buddhist temple, along with an important stupa (No. 2) midway down the hill, towards the west. Some of them, like the great stupa, were originally built by the Mauryan emperor Ashoka in the third century BC, who also erected a monolithic inscribed pillar near it. Over the centuries, though, the royal connection was overshadowed

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by the patronage of hundreds of more ordinary devotees who enlarged the stupa, covering its brick core with a stone cladding, financed the construction of its balustrades and pavement, and also donated the elaborately carved gateways that are its most striking feature today. Such accretions are evident in many other structures as well and, in essence, these encapsulate the long history of the Buddhist community at Sanchi, stretching across roughly 1500 years, from the third century BC till the twelfth century AD.

Such themes have been the subject of several scholarly monographs and articles which, along with exploring the multiple histories that are contained in its epigraphs and structures, have also analysed Sanchi's relationship with contemporaneous Buddhist religious establishments that dotted this part of Central India and with the city of Vidisa, on the patronage of which it depended significantly (Marshall and Foucher 1940, Willis 2000, Shaw 1999, Singh 1996). The focus of this essay, however, is different. It is not concerned with Sanchi's ancient character; instead, it seeks to investigate its modern history. There is a great deal that is known about this from the published literature, especially about the technicalities of the impressive architectural conservation that was undertaken there in the early twentieth century by John Marshall, director general of the Archaeological Survey of India (Marshall and Foucher 1940: vol. 1). This is not surprising since it was his work which made Sanchi the best preserved of all the Buddhist monuments in India.

However, as I shall argue, this sacred space has a tumultuous and messy modern history whose jagged edges get lost when the prism through which it is viewed remains limited to the story of Marshall's engagement with it. First, it is necessary to begin with Sanchi's nineteenth-century past because that makes it immediately evident that as this site was discovered and began to be documented, measured, and studied by modern explorers and archaeologists, this was done in circumstances and through means which disfigured and destroyed large parts of it. To put it another way, the conservation work, which began in the late nineteenth century and came to be vigorously pursued by Marshall from 1912 onwards, was as

much concerned with rescuing stupas and viharas from accumulated debris and jungle as it was with restoring and filling up structural breaches left behind by pioneer excavators. Secondly, in the Marshall era itself, apart from the director general himself, there are many other characters that make up the 'star cast' in the conservation and restoration of Sanchi. Among others, the Bhopal Darbar in whose principality the monuments stood, is connected in a singular way with the site. This requires reiteration because in the available publications it is primarily the British presence and contribution that is highlighted. This connects up with the third aspect that this study highlights, which are the contradictions between the conceptual stereotypes about Indians that inform colonial discourse and the *actual* practical ways in which the British relied upon them. In the story of Sanchi, Marshall's deployment of a common stereotype, that of the unreliable and iconoclastic Muslim, is most forcefully challenged by Muslims themselves, especially by the Begum of Bhopal whose patronage and support, in fact, was to make possible Marshall's sprawling conservation work. Finally, if colonial stereotypes about 'natives' could not, in actuality, be sustained at the practical level of archaeological research and conservation, British monument policy also can hardly be described as either watertight or always successful. Fluctuations and flexibility are visible in imperial policy decisions concerning Sanchi and these, as the essay will argue, connect up with ideological differences among the British ruling class in India as also the changing political circumstances of colonial rule. This is not to suggest that British policy was not ideologically motivated but merely to underline that as an institutional practice it was neither unchanging nor monolithic in character.

Destruction through Excavation

But first, why was large-scale architectural conservation required at Sanchi? This Buddhist religious complex was apparently deserted from the thirteenth century onwards and yet had remained substantially intact through the medieval era. In fact, it was in a reasonably

good state of preservation when it was rediscovered by General Taylor in 1818 (Burgess 1902: 33).

The first modern description of the monument, provided by Edward Fell in 1819, also underlines this fact. Fell was a captain in the 10th Native Infantry and also an Oriental scholar of sorts. As a member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, he presented a number of papers to the Society, on a range of subjects including the *Raghuvamsha* and inscriptions from the fort of Hansi (cf. Nair 1995: 173). But, from the perspective of this essay, it is his account of Sanchi that is of special relevance because it is the only one that pre-dates the first excavations there and, thus, tells us something about how the monuments appeared before they began to be opened up (Fell 1834).

While 'numerous stones lie strewed around in the vicinity of both monuments, being parts of columns, capitals, mutilated images of Buddha, pedestals, tablets covered with sculptured figures of horsemen, elephants, lions, and almost obliterated inscriptions', the monuments themselves appeared to be intact. The dome of the great stupa (Stupa 1) was in one piece and solid, the mortar coating in perfect preservation, with the exception of a couple of places where it had been washed away. Three of the stupa's gateways—the northern, eastern and western—were standing as was the outer railing. Stupa 2, the most important one after the main stupa, was also undamaged (ibid.: 494):

> About a quarter of a mile to the northward of this monument, is another, exactly similar to it in shape, but smaller, and built of freestone, without any cement, each layer closely fitting, and not projecting over each other as in the former; neither has this been covered with a coat of mortar . . . It is in perfect repair, not a stone having fallen, and is surrounded by a colonnade of granite pillars; of the same description as that encompassing the large one . . .

Fell himself was keen on opening up the stupas, and it has not been possible to understand why he was forestalled. We do know that he went on to become secretary at the Hindu College in Banaras in June 1820 and continued to be so till 1824 when he is

said to have died of fever in Bilaspur (Biographical Sketches 1817–32: 1948).

Even before Fell died, however, the stupas were opened up and in the process dismembered and half ruined. Shortly after Fell's observations were published, Sanchi was excavated by T.H. Maddock, the political agent at Bhopal, and his assistant, Captain Johnson (Spilsbury 1835). In the general system of British suzerainty in India then, such political officers were to be found in several princely states. Theoretically speaking, in the case of Bhopal, the political agent, resident at Sehore, was supposed to advise and assist the ruler and was also his sole channel of communication with British authorities. In fact, political agents did a great deal more. For example, H.C. Barstow, when he was the political agent in 1874–5, undertook to translate into English the history of Bhopal written in Urdu by Nawab Shahjahan Begum, the ruler of Bhopal (Begum 1876). The actions of some of Barstow's predecessors, though, had more destructive resonances.

In their search for hidden antiquities, Maddock and Johnson succeeded in splitting Stupa 1's dome, creating a large breach on its side (Fig. 2.1). Because the stones used in the construction were not cemented, substantial portions of the dome collapsed. The great stupa's western gateway was so shaken by this that shortly afterwards it collapsed. As for Stupa 2, the top section of its dome practically disappeared (Fig. 2.2). Clearly, these men regarded the stupas as a happy hunting ground for antiquities and not having found them, they did not even think it necessary to document their foray. This, incidentally, was very much in the tradition of early discoverers. Apparently, when Alexander Cunningham was selecting specimens in the Lahore Museum to be photographed for an exhibition in Vienna, he could only ascertain the find-spots of five or six out of the 600-odd Gandharan pieces in its collection (Vogel 1902).

To continue with the Sanchi story, what did happen because of this excavation was that a third of one monument and a fifth of the other was destroyed (Cunningham 1847: 746). It was such destruction that the next excavators claimed that they hoped to

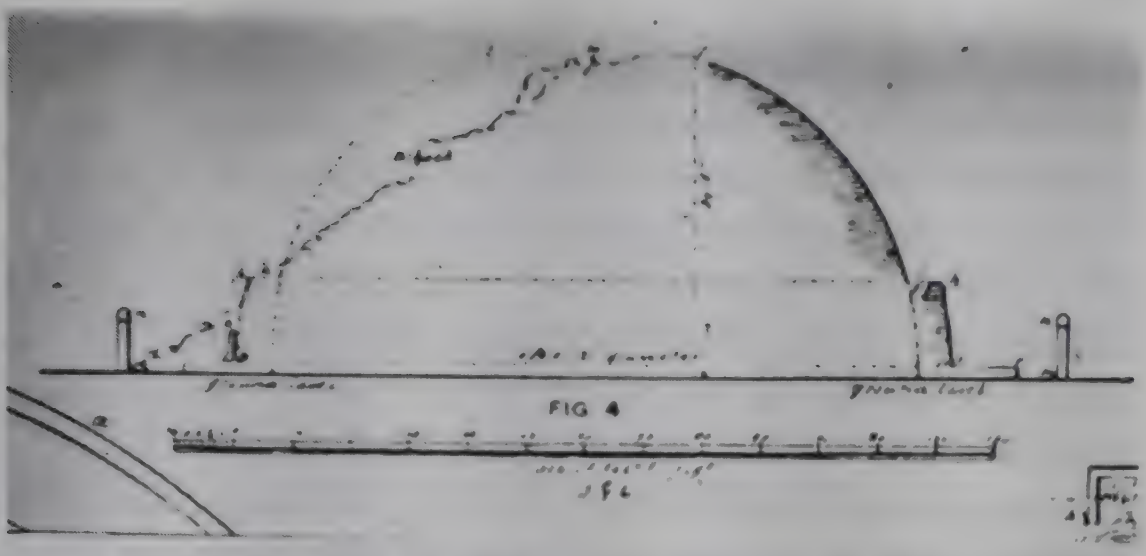

Fig. 2.1: The breach in Stupa 1's dome created by the first excavation

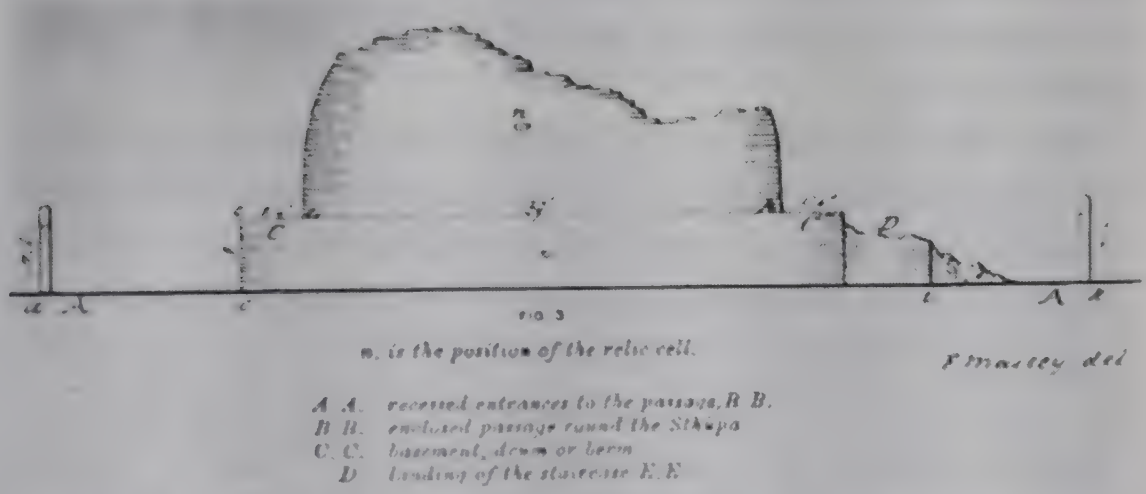
fig 3
n. is the position of the relic cell.
F Maisey del
A A. recessed entrances to the passage, B B.
B B. enclosed passage round the Stupa
C. C. basement, dcum or berm
D landing of the staircase E E

Fig. 2.2: Stupa 2, after the first excavation. The drawing clearly shows that the top section of its dome had practically disappeared

avoid. Conducted almost thirty years after the first one, in early 1851, the excavation was undertaken by Lieutenant F.C. Maisey and Major Alexander Cunningham. Maisey was deputed by the Court of Directors of the East India Company to document the antiquities at Kalinjar as also the Sanchi sculptures in 1849 and he was joined in 1852 by Cunningham, then serving as executive engineer of Gwalior state. Cunningham was by then already an investigator of some repute, having published a great deal on Indo-Greek and Bactrian coins, on Kashmir, as also on the ground level, identification of places mentioned in the itineraries of the Chinese travellers (Imam 1966: 28ff).

In which way was this excavation different from the earlier one? Cunningham believed that they were adopting a technique which would not injure the external appearance of the stupas (Cunningham 1854: 269). It involved sinking perpendicular shafts through the stupas after determining their centres. In the case of Stupa 1, after determining its centre, a well, 5 feet in diameter, was sunk through the solid brickwork to a depth of 48 feet. All of this was done very rapidly—in the case of Stupas 2 and 3, the relics were unearthed after just a few hours' labour. These excavations yielded relic boxes, caskets, and the relics of monks, including those of the Buddha's foremost disciples—Sariputa and Mahamogalana. While most of these treasures they took with them, the inscribed stone box containing Mahamogalana's relics was thrown away and would be rediscovered by Marshall more than sixty years later (Marshall 1913–14: 12).

Like the first excavators, neither Cunningham nor Maisey thought it necessary to repair the structural breaches that they had created. They were, of course, fully aware of the unique character of these remains, evident, for instance, when Cunningham acknowledges that 'the Sanchi bas-reliefs, which date in the early part of the first century of our era, are more original in design and more varied in subject than any other examples of Eastern sculpture that I have seen in India' (Cunningham 1854: viii); or when he writes that 'in illustration of the ancient history of India, the bas-reliefs and inscriptions of the Bhilsa topes are almost equal in importance to the more splendid discoveries made by the enterprising and energetic Layard in the mounds of the Euphrates' (Cunningham 1854: viii–ix). Despite such sentiments, the shafts that had been sunk into the stupas remained, as did the enormous quantities of earth excavated out of them. The extent of damage must have been considerable because, even thirty years later, Lepel Griffin was to angrily write that 'a thousand years of time and weather have not done so much injury to the invaluable Topes at Sanchi as was caused by the action of Major-General Cunningham, the Director General of Archaeology, who years ago mined deep into the Topes in the vain search for coins or inscriptions, and never filled in his excavations' (Griffin 1882a).

The main difference was that unlike Maddock and Johnson who did not even think it necessary to publish the details of their foray, both Cunningham (1854) and Maisey (1892) did document Sanchi. In fact, Cunningham's work was the first systematic exposition of the character, sculpture, and inscriptional wealth of the stupas and remained the standard work on Sanchi till Marshall's volumes were published almost a century later. But from the perspective of the modern fate of ancient religious structures, this excavation was no less destructive than the earlier one.

The Great Stupa's Gateways

So, the main injury to Sanchi was caused by the vandalism of modern excavators. In fact, in reaction to Cunningham's excavation, a scheme to protect some of its most precious sculptural marvels from future vandalism of this type was suggested. This concerned the still-standing gateways of the great stupa, especially the eastern one which was in near-perfect condition and which H.M. Durand, the political agent, persuaded Sikander Begum, the ruler of Bhopal, to offer as a gift to Queen Victoria. He made this suggestion because he felt that this was the only way—that is, by dismantling and removing it from its original setting—it could be safeguarded from the aggressive excavations of British archaeologists. As he put it later (Durand 1868):

> If the Foreign Office turn up the records of that period, they will find that, at my own suggestion, the removal of the one perfect gateway at Sanchi Kaun Keree, for transmission to the British Museum, had been agreed upon by the Begum, and preliminary steps had been taken for this rather serious undertaking before I left Bhopal for England. Afterwards the project fell quietly into oblivion. I am not in favour of removing valuable pieces of antique architecture from the sites and buildings with which they are associated. But the Sanchi Tope had been subjected to such barbarous treatment that it seemed worthwhile to preserve this remarkable gateway. *I must add that the treatment to which I allude was that perpetrated by British, not by native authorities.* (Emphasis added)

Following Durand's advice, the Begum made this offer in 1853. Later, the patronage of Bhopal's rulers was to be crucial in Sanchi's

restoration, but evidently, this was not a commitment that was consistently displayed by all rulers, certainly not by Sikander Begum. Fortunately for Sanchi, even though preliminary arrangements were made, the gateway was not transported to England. First, there was a delay because of the expense involved as also due to the absence of expertise required for dismantling so many tonnes of stone without injuring the sculpture (Hamilton 1856). This work had to be done with great care because of the instructions of the Court of Directors who were categorical about the necessity of taking down the gateway and reconstructing it without injury. In their despatch, they specifically mentioned that 'no dilapidation of the Tope will be allowed to take place, more than is involved in the removal of the gates' (Court of Directors 1857). By the time the preparations were completed, rebellions against the British administration broke out in various parts of the country, including central India. In that atmosphere of turmoil, it is unlikely that the transfer of architectural relics would have been a matter of high priority.

The 1857 revolts did not, however, push into permanent oblivion the question of removing the gateways. In fact, within a decade, this question re-emerged as Sanchi was to again become the object of attention and discussion. This was in 1868, ten years after the administration of India was transferred from the Company to the Crown and seven years after the British Raj instituted an Indian Archaeological Survey for investigating the subcontinent's monuments with Alexander Cunningham as its first archaeological surveyor. However, by February 1866, the Survey's operation were suspended and the focus briefly shifted from archaeological exploration and excavation to description and documentation of extant architectural remains.

The occasion for a discussion on the possibility of removing one of Sanchi's gateways, however, did not arise in this context. It actually originated from a communication, in 1868, to Bhopal's ruler by the French Consul General at Calcutta. Once again, the Begum was requested to present one of the gateways to a European monarch, this time the emperor of France, Napoleon III, who wished to have it erected in Paris (Osborne 1868a). Before

consenting to this, the Begum decided to offer it to the British Museum, and this was conveyed to the viceroy. This offer was to be finally declined. However, the notes of the various members of the Viceroy's Council on the subject are both relevant and important because they indicate not merely the range of opinions on the question but also the fact that, in this instance, the sentiments of those who were in favour of *in situ* conservation prevailed. That this had not always been so needs emphasis. Only a few years before, the imperial government had, by contract, agreed to the removal of antiquities and art objects discovered in the course of archaeological surveys. Alexander Cunningham, after all, had been employed in 1861 to head the Archaeological Survey on terms which apparently included, apart from his salary and a field allowance, *a share in the antiquities* that were to be discovered by him (Roy 1953: 10).

In this case, however, a different attitude prevailed. There was unanimity in the Viceroy's Council about not allowing Sanchi's gateways to be dismantled and several members articulated the need to make a break with the antiquity removal and looting that had marked the early phase of British rule in India. John Strachey was one of them and he argued that 'it would be an act of vandalism little creditable to the British Government to let this gateway go either to London or Paris' (Strachey 1868). Similarly, Richard Temple thought that not only should the two standing gateways be preserved, but the fallen ones ought to be restored with the cost being borne by the Begum and the British government. Temple's (1868) denouncement of the British record in the field of monument conservation in India is particularly damning:

> Individual officers laudably exert themselves to prevent what Mr Strachey truly terms vandalism. And the Government makes occasional efforts. But *nationally,* the modern English people and their Government cannot be got to attend practically and systematically to the preservation of Indian antiquities *in situ.*

And so, the Begum's offer was declined even while the 'loyal' spirit in which it was offered was suitably acknowledged. The communication from the Foreign Department which conveyed the

viceroy's decision also mentioned that though the Sanchi gateway should not be removed to either the British Museum or any other place, a set of plaster casts would be prepared and sent to the French government.

Plaster casts of the eastern gateway were soon to be prepared and sent to Paris, London, and Edinburgh. At the same time, as a consequence of this correspondence, the government was, for the first time, to seriously consider restoring the two fallen gateways. R.J. Meade who was agent to the governor general in Central India was asked to explore this possibility and to enquire about the probable cost of such work. It was soon to become evident, though, that the keenness of the viceroy would not be translated into action. This is evident from the letters that were exchanged, especially the reports of Willoughby Osborne, the political agent at Bhopal, and Brown, the engineer deputed by the Begum. As far as the gateways were concerned, Osborne (1868b) stated that 'it would be impossible to restore them, Mahomedan fanatics having destroyed all the human figures'. Brown's report (1868) is especially interesting because it forcefully states that the stones that made up the two fallen gateways had disappeared: 'Every search made by me in the neighbourhood for the missing stones was unsuccessful, and I conclude that they have either been used in building temples, or carried away by travellers as curiosities. It is a pity that such a rare monument of antiquity has been spoiled by neglect and want of appreciation . . . It is impossible to repair them.' We know this to be both inaccurate and misleading because several years later, when the first phase of restoration work at Sanchi commenced, most of the carved pillars, lintels, and other stones from the ruined gates were found buried in the debris in the vicinity of Stupa 1. In any case, an opportunity to repair the great stupa's gateways was lost. Instead, the imperial government decided that one of them could be copied in plaster of Paris.

Before discussing the specific manner in which this came to be executed, the larger context within which such works were undertaken may be briefly pointed out. When the operations of the Archaeological Survey were suspended in 1866 (they were to

be resumed in 1870), the focus of government-sponsored work shifted from archaeological exploration and excavation to the documentation of India's architectural and art remains. This, incidentally, was intimately connected to the movement for the reformation of industrial design in England which owed its origin to a widespread dissatisfaction with the declining character of craftsmanship there, itself a feature of the Industrial Revolution (Mitter 1977: 221ff). As products came to be produced on a mass scale, little attention was paid to originality either in the conception of design or in its execution. Indian ornamental design was one stream, however, which reformist designers—Gottfried Semper, Owen Jones, and Henry Cole were some of them—believed could improve the state of arts in England. The Great Exhibition of 1851 had already showcased the wealth of Indian design and craftsmanship and, subsequently, the Museum of Ornamental Art was set up in Marlborough House in which a variety of Indian art objects were displayed. These were supposed to instruct students of practical art in good and aesthetic design. Plaster casts, incidentally, were to be prepared for the same reason, 'with a view of obtaining for the Department of Science and Art such illustrations as might be useful for the study of art in this country' (Secretary 1867).

As far as the Sanchi cast was concerned, the person chosen for supervising this task was Lieutenant Henry Hardy Cole. A member of the corps of Royal Engineers, Cole appears to have received some training in the various techniques of modelling. In 1868, when he was first considered by the government of the North Western Provinces for overseeing work pertaining to obtaining casts, photographs, and measurements of historic buildings in that province, he was serving as an assistant engineer in the public works department at Kanpur. Before undertaking the Sanchi project, he had been briefly deputed to do survey work pertaining to ancient buildings in Kashmir as also in the Agra–Mathura region.

The effort invested by him in preparing the Sanchi specimen is worth mentioning (Cole 1870). The entire operations were spread over more than a year. After four months of training in London, a core group of three sappers of the Royal Engineers returned to

India and were to receive assistance from two *mistris* and several Indian modellers. Twenty-eight tonnes of material in eighty-eight boxes—lined with tin so that the cast pieces could be carried back in them to England—arrived a little later. Of the two standing gateways, the eastern one was chosen for reproduction and elastic moulds using gelatine were prepared. These provided the base for making 112 cast pieces at the site. Only one cast of each section was prepared (other plaster copies were to be made in England) since the sharpness of the mould was destroyed because of the heat that was generated when plaster of Paris was poured into it. The pieces were then packed and transported back to England where they were fitted together. Approximately Rs 50,000 was spent on the whole operation.

As one sifts through the details concerning the preparation of the cast, the money and energy that went into creating it, the fact that enormous investments were made in such ventures in the name of archaeology at a point in time when the Archaeological Survey operations had been discontinued, seems at best ironical, and at worst, unfortunate and wasteful. That money had been wrongly spent was later articulated by Lord Mayo in his famous Minute of 30 May 1870. While suggesting that an Indian Archaeological Survey be set up again, he pointed out that the imperial government had 'spent as much upon desultory attempts at photography and castings as would have maintained a small Department of Government in full operation' (Mayo 1870).

Restoration: The Beginnings

The restoration of the Sanchi monuments, when such work was to finally commence, had an eventful history beginning in 1881 and continuing till 1919 or so. The period spans two qualitatively different phases in the history of Indian archaeology, both in terms of the place of monument conservation within the institutions of the British Raj and the financial support that was available for it.

During the first phase, conservation remained outside the purview of the Archaeological Survey. Instead, in 1880, a curator of ancient monuments was appointed. This was H.H. Cole, the

same who had earlier supervised the preparation of the cast of the Sanchi gateway. Appointed for a period of three years, his duties now included visiting the principal historic buildings of India as also prescribing remedies for their conservation. Sanchi was among the many monuments whose restoration he would oversee in those years.

In 1880, the suggestion to begin Sanchi's restoration emanated from the recommendation of Major Prideaux, political agent at Bhopal, and work commenced in 1881. This included removing the jungle that had overwhelmed several ruins, the collection of carved stone fragments and, most importantly, the repair of the great breach in Stupa 1 (Cole 1885). The latter task was rendered difficult by the enormous quantities of debris that had been washed out of it because of which the face of the great stupa in 1881 had got flattened. The width of the breach measured from 15 to 40 feet and its depth from the face towards the centre from 3 or 4 feet to 25 feet. Thick stems of creepers had also entirely filled the breach. These had to be removed gradually while the breach was built up with dry masonry. The deep shaft (5 feet in diameter and 48 feet in depth) sunk by Cunningham and Maisey was filled in as well. Austin Mears, the superintendent of public works who oversaw the work, was in fact reasonably pleased with the manner in which he had repaired the dome and he believed that 'there will be nothing to prevent it standing another 2000 years as it had hitherto done till wrecked by blundering archaeologists' (Mears 1883).

Part of the work undertaken by Mears, though, had to be undone in the following year by Major J.B. Keith who had been appointed as Cole's assistant in central India (Cole 1885: 2–3). For one thing, the steps which had been built to the top of the plinth of the great stupa were made from a number of carved stones. Cole believed that these probably belonged to the upper railing and, therefore, had to be removed. Furthermore, the sculpture was cleaned, the approach road on the northern side of the hill opened out and restored, and the ancient causeway which led to Stupa 2 was improved and stepped. In addition, all vegetation from the great stupa was cleared, which must have also resulted in the removal of many small *in situ* stupas. Apparently, the area around the main

stupa was cleared for a distance of some 60 feet around the ground balustrade which resulted in most of the stupas around it getting displaced.

The most important repairs related to the gateways. By 1883, Keith had succeeded in re-erecting both the southern and western gateways as also in repairing the gateway to Stupa 3 (Fig. 2.3). But several mistakes, were made, among the most serious being the reversal of the positions of the top and bottom lintels of the southern gateway (Marshall and Foucher 1940, II: Plate 10). On the top

Fig. 2.3: The gateway of Stupa 3 which was re-erected in the 1880s

lintel, for instance, it is the icons of the seven Manushi Buddhas which should have formed part of the front, rather than the representation of Maya (see Figs 2.4 and 2.5). Similarly, on the bottom lintel, the War of Relics which faces the back should have been on the front, rather than representations of potbellied dwarfs. This error was repeated in the case of Stupa 3 where, too, the upper lintel was set up back to front (Marshall and Foucher 1940: Plate 95).

Even while these repairs were in progress, a proposal to remove one of the oldest pieces of sculpture, the Ashokan pillar capital, was being seriously mooted by the very archaeologist who, thirty years ago, had conducted destructive excavations there. This was the suggestion of Alexander Cunningham, director general of the Archaeological Survey, and it was made by him when the larger question of disposing of objects that were discovered in the course of archaeological surveys was referred to him. The question itself had emanated from a memorandum of the Indian Museum, Calcutta. Apparently, in the 1860s and 1870s, the need to augment

Fig. 2.4: The top lintel, on the back of the southern gateway, with its icons of the seven Manushi Buddhas. This should have formed part of the front of the gateway

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Fig. 2.5: The top lintel, on the front of the southern gateway, with the representation of Maya which is currently there. This should have formed part of the back of the gateway

and expand on the existing collections of the museum in certain key areas was being increasingly felt. There was a perception that the museum's archaeological collection was incomplete; the solution that the trustees of the museum suggested was that it be made the permanent custodian of objects that were discovered during archaeological surveys. In his response to this memorandum, Cunningham submitted a long list of objects that could be sent to Calcutta and one of them was the Ashokan pillar capital at Sanchi. That this was an opportune moment for undertaking its removal was also stressed by him, since the stupas were being repaired under the superintendence of British officers who would, he believed, facilitate its transfer. The incongruity of removing archaeological objects from the vicinity of monuments that were being repaired had completely escaped Cunningham, but its inappropriateness was noticed by others. H.M. Durand, a member of the Viceroy's Council, was quick to observe that 'it is no good giving Captain Cole a lakh of rupees to restore and preserve if we steal his treasures through other agency' (Durand 1882). But the incident reveals

how archaeologists and conservators frequently worked at cross purposes as also the importance of the imperial government's intervention which ensured that some of its officers did not destroy with one hand what they were seeking to restore with the other.

Before the restoration programme at Sanchi was completed, Cole's appointment as curator lapsed and was not subsequently renewed. In 1886, for the first time, conservation came to be placed, along with epigraphy and exploration, under a single executive head—the director of the Archaeological Survey, in this case, James Burgess. In the years that followed one hears very little of Sanchi. We do, however, know that in the 1890s, part of the procession path of the main stupa was destroyed when a buttress was erected to support the bulging wall of the terrace (Marshall and Foucher, 1940: I, 35). Possibly, the pace of work was slow because of major cuts in the archaeological budget. In fact, from 1885 onwards, if we must isolate a single recurrent imperative in government policy with regard to monuments and field research, it was the urgency to scale down expenditure. By 1895, the financial outlay for archaeology was just a little over Rs 60,000. Archaeological posts were also allowed to lapse or were abolished including that of the director general (in 1889). By 1898, Viceroy Elgin was even uncertain about whether archaeological work in India required state assistance at all! The reasons for this state of affairs need not detain us (Lahiri 1997), but what is reasonably clear is that it is only with the arrival of George Nathaniel Curzon (1899–1905) that a singularly desultory era of archaeological work came to an end.

Restoration: The Marshall Era

From the beginning of his viceroyalty, buildings and their restoration were a high priority for Curzon. In fact, he was responsible for making conservation the main focus of the work of the Archaeological Survey as also for reviving the post of its director and appointing the young John Marshall in 1902 (Lahiri 1997). Ironically, it was during his viceroyalty that Sanchi became the site of some indiscriminate restoration.

Curzon visited Sanchi during the first year of his viceroyalty (November 1899) and, as elsewhere, he left a series of instructions that ranged from the filling up of the crevices on the outer surface of Stupa 1 to the manner in which loose sculpted and inscribed stones were to be collected and arranged (Curzon 1905a). Again, in the beginning of 1902, Henry Cousens, the archaeological superintendent of the Western Circle, had drawn the attention of the state engineer of Bhopal to certain measures that were necessary for the protection of the northern and eastern gateways, and for the conservation of Stupa 2 (Marshall 1905a). Work was started in 1904 by David Cook, the state engineer, and included various kinds of repairs, some of which were fairly straightforward like fixing an iron band around the dome of the main stupa, while other repairs were more difficult such as the rebuilding of Stupa 2's dome (Cousens 1905). This, in fact, was not very successful since the curve that he gave to it was that of an Islamic dome rather than the Buddhist hemispherical one. What was most damaging, though, was that Cook also began repairing the outer railing of the main stupa and, instead of trying to preserve and repair old and split pieces, he decided to replace them in large numbers—as many as 17 pillars, 12 railing pieces, and 7 coping stones, several of which bore the names of donors of the late centuries BC, were replaced. The new coping stones used by Cook were made up of two pieces instead of one and, in many cases, with straight and not sloping joints. The original pillars were monoliths but the new ones were mortar-jointed ones, in three sections. Greater damage would, no doubt, have taken place but for the intervention of C.E. Luard, the superintendent of gazetteers in Central India, as a consequence of which Cook was telegraphically ordered to suspend work.

Interestingly enough, Marshall, the director general of the Survey, had been absolutely unaware that repairs of any kind were going on at Sanchi until he received Luard's letter. He, however, did visit it shortly after this bungling became public knowledge. Apart from a few rectifications, he admitted that Cook's faulty restoration could not be altered because that would further damage the old work which was still *in situ* (Marshall 1905a). Quite aptly, therefore,

Curzon described Marshall's report as the 'consecration of a desecration' (Curzon 1905a).

More importantly, this episode also illustrates the attitude of the colonial administration in relation to its own people as compared to 'other' groups, the caretaker, and the local princely family in this case. As far as Cook was concerned, he was exonerated from any blame since we are told that he had suffered a serious injury during this time and the communication to the Bhopal Darbar was almost entirely purged of any references to Cook's culpability. Many decades later as well, in his Sanchi volumes, Marshall's summary of the history of conservation there, remained silent on this destruction. Treasure hunters and British archaeologists of the nineteenth century including Cunningham and Cole were mentioned, the harm done by 'Moslem iconoclasts' was also highlighted, but the destructive 'restoration' done during the first few years of his own tenure was excluded.

Going back to 1904, Cook's 'restoration' became the occasion for a larger dialogue within the portals of the imperial government about ways to conserve Sanchi. From the correspondence it seems that in addition to poor restoration work, the caretaker arrangements with regard to the hundreds of sculptural elements that were lying around came to be viewed as highly unsatisfactory, and Marshall recommended the creation of a museum to ensure their safe custody. But what is most striking is that whereas poor restoration was explained away as an aberration resulting from personal injury, the religion of the caretakers came to be blamed for the laxity of superintendence, and this soon degenerated into framing the religion of the caretakers as the chief culprit. For Marshall, Muslim chowkidars (caretakers) were inherently incapable of looking after Buddhist monuments (Marshall 1905b). These, he suggested, required to be tended by 'devoted hands', those of Buddhist chowkidars whose services, he believed, could be arranged through the Maha Bodhi Society.

In making this suggestion, the director general had evidently not bargained for the powerful persona of Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum, the ruler of Bhopal (Fig. 2.6). She would later become Marshall's main benefactor and his Sanchi volumes are, in fact,

Fig. 2.6: Sultan Jahan Begum, with her granddaughter

dedicated to her memory. But the relationship did not begin on an optimistic note. The last in a dynasty of women rulers, Sultan Jahan (*r.* 1901–26) is much remembered for her pioneering work on education and on women's emancipation. An ardent reformer, she is known to have publicly abandoned purdah (veil) a couple of years before her death. Apparently, she was also a 'hands-on Begum' and was known to personally examine every file, inspect the treasury, look through the registers, and even appoint state employees herself (Khan 2000: 155). Quite naturally, Marshall's letter with his

suggestion of replacing Muslim caretakers at Sanchi with Buddhist ones was referred to her. Almost immediately, she conveyed her distaste and opposition to his proposal.

Some of this opposition, it seems, stemmed from the well-known 'troublemaker' reputation of the Maha Bodhi Society's founder (Curzon 1905b). This was Anagarika Dharmapala, the scion of a wealthy Ceylonese family who, in 1891, had founded this society in Colombo. The timing of its founding was closely connected with Dharmapala's perception of another ancient Buddhist complex which he had then just visited. This was the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya in Bihar which stands close to where the Buddha had attained enlightenment. Over the centuries, though, it had become a religious place where a mass of both Buddhist and Hindu practices came to be inscribed, and since 1727, the legal proprietorship of the shrine had vested with a Hindu (Saiva) mahant. In the Indian context, this was not a unique situation (Lahiri 1999: 35). But in the latter part of the nineteenth century, there were some who regarded the multi-religious character of the shrine as evidence of its 'desecration', influenced by a revivalist wave to 'cleanse' Buddhism that was sweeping across large parts of Asia. We need not go into the details of this revival, but from Thailand to Sri Lanka various societies and wealthy patrons were attempting to re-establish a 'pure' Buddhism in consonance with the orthodox practices and attitudes contained in Pali religious texts, and Anagarika Dharmapala was the best representative of that movement in Sri Lanka (for a discussion of this, see ibid.). By the time he came to Bodh Gaya, he had preached over large parts of his country, raised funds for his faith, and propagated his religious agenda through pamphlets and periodicals. For a religious crusader of this mould, Mahabodhi, where both Hindus and Buddhists worshipped at the same shrine, must have been abhorrent as was the presence of a Hindu legal proprietor. Therefore, one of the main objects of the Maha Bodhi Society that he founded was to 'reclaim' the temple at Bodh Gaya for the Buddhists.

No legal proprietor, especially one whose preceptors had enjoyed the fruits of religious patronage there for 150 years or so, was likely to give in to such demands without a serious fight. Consequently,

a massive dispute came to develop around this shrine in the late nineteenth century, one that made national headlines and went on to become the subject of several legal cases. The Begum of Bhopal must have known about this and she must also have been aware of the parallels between her situation and that of the legal proprietor of Mahabodhi. Her personal faith, like that of the *mahant,* was not Buddhist. So, she probably anticipated that if the help of the Maha Bodhi Society was sought for the superintendence of the Buddhist monuments in her principality, Dharmapala would, sooner or later, make a claim for taking over Sanchi as well.

But the Begum was also incensed by Marshall's suggestion because, in effect, it meant that her capacity to look after Bhopal's monuments was being doubted. As she put it, Marshall's action was calculated to cast on her administration a slur which was not deserved. Marshall, on the other hand, (mis)understood her resistance to the appointment of Buddhist watchmen as relating to her personal religion and this soon came to represent to him a disinclination to preserve Sanchi itself. So, he seriously mooted the possibility of 'relieving' her of Sanchi, by arranging for the imperial government to take over its custody (Marshall 1906). The endeavour here, as in the case of the caretakers, was to exclude the local princely family from a monument in its own principality because of their personal religion. Fortunately, this was not to happen but, obviously, Marshall's interaction with Sanchi and the Begum of Bhopal began on a sour note.

Many years later, their relationship would take an entirely different and altogether more cordial turn. This was in the summer of 1912 when Sultan Jahan Begum let it be known that she was anxious to procure some monographs on the Sanchi stupa. There is nothing in the official records that can throw light on the timing of her request. We do, however, learn from her autobiography that Sanchi had figured in her public life on many occasions. Over the years, she had hosted viceroys, military commanders, and members of Indian princely families there. Even her son, Hamidullah Khan, and his bride were first brought there, before being taken to Bhopal (for this and other details in this paragraph, Begum 1922: 233ff,

272; also, Begum 1927: 203). This was in 1905 when the bridal couple's wedding party was returning from Peshawar and was received by the Begum with pomp and presents at Sanchi's dak bungalow. But it must have been her latest visit that was still fresh in her memory. In November 1911, when she returned from Europe, Sultan Jahan had stayed at Sanchi because of an outbreak of plague at Bhopal, and it was from there that she had proceeded to Delhi to attend the Darbar of George V. It is possible that this last sojourn rekindled in her a desire to know more about the splendid Buddhist remains in whose vicinity she had so recently camped.

When Marshall privately heard that the Begum was trying to get the available publications on Sanchi, he decided to take the initiative and offered her the volumes on the subject in his library. Apparently, at some point in the recent past she had personally mentioned to Marshall that she was interested in getting a complete monograph published on Sanchi. So, he also used this as an opportunity to remind the Begum that the available publications on Sanchi were outdated and inaccurate. They ought to be replaced, as he put it, with a monograph more worthy of the famous monument and one that was financed by the Bhopal Darbar (Marshall 1912).

To Marshall's delight and surprise, the Begum responded generously and enthusiastically. Since the writing of such a monograph required that the director general stay at Sanchi, she offered him all the necessary logistical and financial support (Fig. 2.7). This including reserving a bungalow for his wife, children, and their governess, arranging cows for his camp, agreeing to his suggestion about paying a large honorarium to Alfred Foucher (a French scholar and an established authority on Buddhist iconography) for his collaboration, and providing the coolie labour that was required for the actual survey work (Begum 1912a, 1912b).

At Sanchi, although Marshall had visualized his work only as a prelude to the preparation of a monograph on the monuments, he realized very soon after arriving there that before a monograph could be produced the site would need to be extensively excavated

Fig. 2.7: John Marshall and his family in the Sanchi camp, accompanied by liveried attendants and elephants for transport

and its monuments repaired. When Marshall commenced his Sanchi programme in 1912, only Stupa 1 and a few other remains were visible. So, the first step was to clear the entire enclosed area of the thick growth of trees and brushwood in which it was enveloped. This was followed by the excavation of the eastern and southern sides of the central plateau where, in the first season of work itself, substantial remains—of temples, monasteries and stupas—were found. Important pieces of sculpture too were located as, for instance, the fragmentary umbrella of Mauryan date which crowned the summit of the great stupa (Marshall 1913–14: 5). The conservation and restoration of the main stupa was undertaken in 1916–17. Apparently, when the breach in the stupa was repaired in 1881, the random rubble and earth that was filled in had not been allowed to settle before being faced with masonry. Consequently, as the core began to settle, the upper part began to collapse inwards and the lower part slowly bulged outwards. The restoration of this section required 2500 cubic feet of new masonry. After it was redone, the balustrades that had fallen from the stairway, terrace and summit were replaced and restored (Marshall and Foucher 1940, I: 40).

As for Stupa 3, to Marshall belongs the credit of painstakingly restoring a hemispherical form from the heap of stones which it had been reduced to (ibid.: 9). Major repairs were also undertaken

at Temple 18 whose large leaning columns, in fact, were reset in a most novel way. Because timber for scaffolding was not available, walls were erected in two lines, parallel to one another, inside and outside the colonnade with short cross-walls between the columns (ibid.). This made the task of lifting the columns to reset them in their correct positions easier. Several other temples (31, 32, 45) were also repaired and a small museum was erected at the base of the Sanchi hill where sculptures, inscriptions, and architectural fragments were catalogued and arranged. The architectural elements were divided between the site and the museum. While the stump of the Ashokan pillar remained *in situ* and some broken lengths were placed by its side, the capital and crowning lions were placed in the museum. Similarly, in the case of pillar no. 35, near the northern gateway, while the remains of its shaft stand on the hill, Bodhisattva Vajrapani's statue, which crowned the capital, is in the museum.

There is little doubt that the large exposed and conserved monuments that we see and admire in Sanchi were largely the result of Marshall's massive programme of excavation and restoration that was finally completed around 1919. Even today, Marshall's stamp is writ large over Sanchi, on its monuments which he carefully uncovered and restored, among the foliage of *khirni* (*Mimusops hexandra*) trees that he planted all around them, and even on the house where he stayed which is locally still referred to as 'Marshall House'.

Ironically, what is not as well known is that the very persons whom he had viewed with such grave suspicion played a crucial role in Sanchi's restoration. For one thing, Sultan Jahan Begum was his main benefactor there. The cost of that work as also that of the construction of the Sanchi Museum and the publication of Marshall's definitive volumes on Sanchi was entirely financed by the Bhopal Darbar (Begum 1912a, 1912b). Most strikingly, in sharp contrast to what Marshall had had to say in 1905 about the unreliability of Muslims, including those that he employed in the Archaeological Survey, a Muslim, Munshi Ghulam Qadir, was his excavation assistant and right-hand man at Sanchi. Marshall's

preface to the Sanchi volumes acknowledges that Qadir 'did yeoman's service in the task of excavating and restoring its monuments', and, in fact, a whole paragraph is devoted to his contribution (Marshall and Foucher, 1940, I: Preface). Incidentally, it was the same Ghulam Qadir to whom Marshall also entrusted the excavation of the Dharmarajika stupa, another Buddhist monument, at Taxila.

Return of the Relics

The story, however, does not end with the completion of Marshall's restoration programme. There is a third element in Sanchi's modern history which is worth discussing which concerns the 'return' or restitution of some of its relics.

Antiquities from Sanchi, as was pointed out earlier, had been removed from the site when Cunningham and Maisey had excavated the stupas in the nineteenth entury. This included the corporeal relics (in this case, tiny bone fragments) of the Buddha's direct disciples like Sariputa and Mahamogalana and later Buddhist teachers as well, along with the reliquaries or caskets in which these had been placed. Most of what they found eventually reached two London museums—the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. But, what is less well known is that once Marshall's conservation work was over, the Bhopal Darbar made a serious move to get the British Museum to return its share of the Sanchi antiquities. Today, there is a large public debate about the 'movement' of cultural treasure and the necessity of their 'return' in situations where this did not happen legitimately, rendered more urgent by the recent instances involving large-scale looting of archaeological treasures from sites and museums in Afghanistan and Iraq. There is also a legal framework within which objects of various kinds have in fact been returned to their homelands (Greenfield 1989). But as Greenfield's overview of such cases shows, these were relatively rare in the early part of the twentieth century, when the demand for Sanchi's relics was first made by the Bhopal ruling family.

The Bhopal Darbar first discussed the possibility of bringing back the relics with John Marshall in or around 1919. Marshall spent the summer of that year in England and during that time he made a list of the antiquities from Sanchi in the British Museum, and he asked for casts of these objects to be made and despatched to Bhopal (Marshall 1920a). This must have become the occasion for also considering the possibility of bringing back the originals to Sanchi. Marshall's opinion was that even though Sanchi was the rightful and appropriate place to preserve the relics and caskets, it was unlikely that the authorities at the British Museum could be prevailed upon to return them (ibid.). In spite of Marshall's scepticism, in July 1920, Nawabzada Iftikharulmulk (1920) decided to follow up the matter with C.E. Luard, the political agent at Bhopal, and his letter to him clearly stated the reason why the Bhopal Darbar was seeking to bring back the objects to Sanchi:

> Some years back, a few relic caskets and other objects, of which a list is herewith enclosed, were taken away by Sir Alexander Cunningham from Sanchi to the British Museum. Sanchi now has got a Museum of its own and I trust you will agree with me in thinking that this Museum has a prior claim on these valuable objects. I should therefore be much obliged if through your kind offices the authorities of the British Museum London could be persuaded to return these articles.

Luard, in turn, referred this letter to Marshall, who repeated what he had communicated to the Bhopal Darbar (Marshall 1920b). He wrote to Luard that he did not suppose.

> that the British Museum would contemplate for a moment, returning the original antiquities to Sanchi, nor do I imagine that the India Office would give any support to such a proposal, which is directly opposed to the accepted policy of the Museum. Indeed if such a precedent were once established the British Museum would quickly find itself despoiled of half of its treasures, which would be demanded back by Greece, Egypt and Italy and scores of other countries. In the circumstances, I suggest, therefore, that the best course would be to drop the matter.

The matter of repatriating the objects was then dropped. But it was to resurface once again after a lapse of several years and this time it would eventually lead to the transfer of some relics and relic caskets from England to Sanchi.

In this second impetus, to begin with, the initiative was taken by the Buddhist societies. Following a resolution passed at a meeting by the Buddha Society in Bombay in 1938, various societies made an appeal to the Government of India to request the return of the Sanchi relics from the Victoria and Albert Museum in South Kensington (Maha Bodhi 1991: 183). These relics, the resolution stated, should be handed over to the Maha Bodhi Society of Calcutta for being enshrined at Sarnath. This was followed by another request, six months later, this time by the Maha Bodhi Society itself that they proposed to enshrine the relics in a vihara at New Delhi. This demand, incidentally, was in line with what had been happening to Buddhist relics in British India where these were usually handed over to the Maha Bodhi Society. For instance, the Bhattiprolu relics, discovered by the Archaeological Survey in 1891 and since then kept in the Madras Museum, were made over to the Maha Bodhi Vihara at Calcutta in 1922. Again, some relics discovered by the Archaeological Survey at Taxila (Punjab), Nagarjunakonda (Madras Presidency), and Mirpurkhas (Sind) were also presented to the Society for enshrinement at the Mulagandhakuti Vihara at Sarnath.

By 1939, the Museum authorities agreed to return the Sanchi relics to India, but due to the outbreak of the Second World War, the transfer was postponed in view of the risk involved (Abbasi 1940). The decision of the Museum, however, was widely reported in the Indian press and this, in turn, brought Bhopal back to the centre of the question of where the relics should be preserved.

A report in the *Statesman* of 3 February 1940 regarding the proposed handing over was seen by A.H. Haider Abbasi, political member of the Bhopal government. He immediately wrote to the political agent in Bhopal, strongly underlining the *locus standi* of the Bhopal government. Interestingly enough, it was the letter of Marshall which he cited where the director general had expressed

his opinion that Sanchi was the place where such objects should be rightfully kept (ibid.):

> . . . I would invite attention to the correspondence ending with the Political Agent's D.O. letter No. 4079, dated the 28th August, 1920. The Government of Bhopal have always been most anxious to have these relics in the Sanchi Museum. They had some correspondence on the subject with the then Director General of Archaeology in India, viz: Sir John Marshall. In the latter's D.O. letter No. 335, dated the 5th February, 1920, the opinion expressed is that the most proper place for enshrining the relics, taken away from the Sanchi Stupas, will be the site of Sanchi itself. The question of the restoration of these relics etc. was not pressed in 1920, because the Political Agent did not see much chance of the British Museum agreeing to return them. Now, however, that the Victoria and Albert Museum in London have agreed to hand over these relics to the Mahabodhi Society, to be enshrined at the Buddhist temple in New Delhi, the Government of Bhopal, as owners of the relics, request that these may kindly be made over to them for preservation at the Sanchi Museum which is unquestionably the most suitable place for them. It is hoped that the wishes of the Bhopal Government in this matter would receive due consideration, and the relics, instead of being made over to the Mahabodhi Society, will be restored to them on the termination of the war.

A protracted wrangle then ensued about where the relics were to be kept once they were sent back. On the one hand L.G. Wallis (1940), political agent in Bhopal, strongly supported the Bhopal government's request. On the other hand, curiously enough, K.N. Dikshit who, as director general of the Archaeological Survey, headed an organization that favoured keeping objects at the sites to which they belonged, in this case maintained that 'the right of the community who holds them sacred should be given precedence over those of Sanchi' (Dikshit 1940). Eventually, the Bhopal government negotiated with the Maha Bodhi Society and its request prevailed (Maha Bodhi 1991: 184). The relics left England in February 1947 and were brought back to Sanchi, after travelling to Colombo and Calcutta (Maha Bodhi 1991: 184–5). It was the Bhopal government which donated land for constructing a vihara

to house them and also contributed several thousand rupees for the building that was constructed there.

There is, though, a final point that is worth mentioning. Apparently, the relics—those of Sariputra and Mahamogalana—which were brought back and enshrined on the Sanchi hill, while admittedly those of the Buddha's two disciples, are the ones that Maisey and Cunningham had removed from the neighbouring Buddhist site at Satdhara. The Sanchi relics of these two disciples of the Buddha, in fact, are untraceable (Willis 2000: 68).

Constructing Difference: Some Implications of the Sanchi Story

Notwithstanding this final twist, at a purely personal level the modern history of Sanchi is important to me for at least two reasons. First, the Bhopal Darbar's role in its architectural restoration and in the restitution of relics that were believed to be from Sanchi reveals the manner in which Indians contributed to the maintenance of historic structures in British India. In this case, it was the rulers of the state that were instrumental, but there are other examples where more ordinary individuals and groups of various kinds provided similar support and patronage. Such details are significant because as this little-known history is eventually developed and fleshed out, a more rounded picture of conservation in colonial India will emerge, one in which it is not just our former rulers who appear as the guardians of subcontinental monuments.

Secondly, this story about a famous Buddhist site in which one of the central protagonists is a woman ruler is important precisely because women rulers, especially those concerned with the upkeep of monuments, are not a particularly common phenomenon in modern India. In a larger sense, the fact that this ruler, Sultan Jahan Begum, does not appear in the familiar form of a victim, so commonly encountered in all sorts of historical situations, but as an active agent in the modern history of Sanchi, one who refuses to be intimidated by British notions about how she should function, is also relevant. This is relevant because it connects up the larger

question of identity, on the one hand with the manner in which cultural difference is inscribed into colonial discourse and its intersection with British monument policy and, on the other hand, with indigenous responses to the ascription of such identities. Perhaps it may be useful to spell out a few of these dimensions in this concluding section.

A recurrent theme that has been encountered throughout the Sanchi story concerns the different ways in which British scholars and officials constructed themselves and their 'native' others. There is Alexander Cunningham, for instance, in whose monograph, *The Bhilsa Topes*, Indians—generally described as 'bigoted Musalmans', 'avaricious zamindars' (landlords) and destructively rancorous 'fiery Saivas' (devotees of the Hindu god Shiva)—are represented as vandals (Cunningham 1854). In contrast, British explorers who, as Cunningham was aware, in their search for antiquities were injuring Indian monuments at an alarming rate, are described very positively. He calls them 'curious Saxons, from a distant land' who held the keys to unlocking India's history. But what is equally evident is that Cunningham's superior image of British archaeologists was not shared even by his own contemporaries. H.M. Durand was one official who, as we saw, was convinced that Sanchi's most precious sculptural marvels needed to be protected against aggressive British excavators, and that the only way to do that was to carefully dismantle and remove them to England. Later, this sentiment was echoed by Lepel Griffin (1882b) who pointed out that 'the chief injury and the one most difficult to repair to the Sanchi Tope is that caused by the vandalism of the archaeologists themselves, whose path through India may be traced by the monuments irreparably injured by their hands'.

As we move into the Marshall era, fluctuations in British pronouncements can be similarly charted. John Marshall's first perception of the problems of upkeep of the monuments at Sanchi, which he had sought to link with the personal religion of the caretakers and the ruler, was to dramatically change and, eventually, as we saw, he dedicated his volumes to the memory of the very Begum about whom he had painted such a negative stereotype.

This, incidentally, was not very different from the variations that can be charted in the views of Lord Curzon, Marshall's patron. Curzon, as the viceroy of India, was known to have linked monument destruction by Indians to genetic defects as when he pointed out that vandalism was 'congenital' in Indian rulers (cf. Lahiri 2001: 271). At the same time, the tenor of Curzon's statements is qualitatively different when confronted with those parts of India where several princely families were involved in conservation work. For example, while recommending that a reasonable sum should be given by the government for the conservation of monuments at Mandu in Central India, Curzon acknowledged that the ruling princely family of Dhar had 'at different times within the past quarter of a century expended certain sums upon the upkeep of a possession of which it is intensely proud' (Curzon 1903).

At the same time, even as we acknowledge that within British colonial pronouncements there are multiple representations of themselves and of Indians, it is important to bear in mind that at the level of formal public policy, the picture is much more monochromatic. For instance, in the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act of 1904, a religious stereotype provided the template for the imperial government to categorize various historic structures and to decide on who could intervene on questions of their custody. In the case of religious monuments, only those owners could enter into an agreement with the government who were followers of the religion to which the monument belonged. As Clause 6.3 of the Act put it:

> Nothing in this section shall be deemed to empower any person not being of the same religion as the person on whose behalf he is acting to make or execute any agreement relating to a protected monument which or any part of which is periodically used for the religious worship or observances of that religion

Ingrained in this provision is a larger colonial notion that the religion of a 'native' naturally prevented him from acting in the religious interests of 'natives' following religious practices

other than his own, while the British, being a more superior race, ostensibly displayed an exemplary impartiality towards shrines and establishments of all religions and creeds. If such provisions had remained confined to the statute book, they could have been treated as mere theoretical formulations. But architectural conservation was, in fact, frequently sought to be premised on such assumptions (Lahiri 2001: 272).

British monument policy institutionalized existing differences in new ways and this, in turn, created new contradictions. The dispute that erupted around the Mahabodhi shrine, which has been briefly discussed earlier, highlights this connection. The pre-modern history of worship there was heterogeneous, evident in the various antiquities and inscriptions that the shrine complex had yielded as it came to be documented in the nineteenth century (Cunningham 1892). This had not created any problems for Buddhist worshippers until the creation of a pan-Buddhist axis towards the end of the nineteenth century. The contentious politics that subsequently came to surround the shrine, the nature of the pan-Buddhist agenda in which the historical evolution of the shrine was ignored, and the manner in which Anagarika Dharmapala, founder of the Maha Bodhi Society, spearheaded the movement to 'reclaim' the temple from Hindu forms of worship and a Hindu proprietor have been explored at length elsewhere (Lahiri 1999). But what is relevant is that this was seriously exacerbated by the imperial initiative undertaken by Curzon, which, contrary to the assertion that the government did not interfere in matters of religion, invested great prestige and energy in the dispute. Most significantly, he too ignored Bodh Gaya's archaeology and history as he attempted to convert it into an exclusively Buddhist shrine. This initiative was obviously premised on a classification of religious complexes which he later incorporated into the specific provision of the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act that has been quoted above, in which these were perceived as belonging to only one religion and its community of believers—the religion of the founders of the shrine. Any hybridity or blurring of distinctions among places of worship came to be seen as evidence of debasement

and/or degeneration. This is a good example of how, within colonial policy, religious groupings were manipulated with very adverse results. Thus, even while we talk of the 'construction' of identities, with all the implications of artifice and contrivance that are evoked by such phraseology, it is necessary to remember that the impact of such social engineering could be very real and deleterious.

Sanchi, however, makes evident that, fortunately, this was not always the case. While the Begum of Bhopal's sense of identity as a good ruler was certainly connected with the question of safeguarding the monuments in her realm, she refused to fall in line with the crude religious paradigm based on which the imperial government visualized this issue. Eventually, she successfully demonstrated to the British that personal faith—be it that of the humble watchmen or the ruling house—was irrelevant to the question of providing support for the ancient Buddhist heritage of her state. Considering that constructed difference was so frequently transformed into a very real inequality as it came to be institutionalized by the colonial state, it is this aspect—the resistance of a strong princely ruler to the British invocation of religious difference for structuring monument policy in her state—which, above all, stands out in this story of Sanchi.

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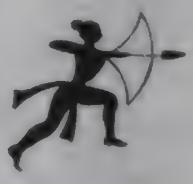
3

Bodh Gaya: An Ancient Buddhist Shrine and its Modern History



Introduction

THIS ESSAY PROPOSES TO HIGHLIGHT SOME LITTLE-known aspects about a renowned ancient shrine in order to address and contextualize its more recent disputed history. The shrine is the Mahabodhi complex in Bihar and stands close to where the Buddha attained enlightenment (Fig. 3.1). Since the time when a temple was first built here in commemoration of that sacred incident, with only occasional interruptions, it has remained a place of worship. On account of this long history, it became a religious place where a mass of heterogeneous practices and traditions, both Buddhist and Hindu, came to be inscribed.

Curiously enough, the revival of Buddhist patronage in the latter part of the nineteenth century coincided with the beginning of a contentious politics that has since surrounded the shrine, politics that involved the reification of Mahabodhi into an exclusively Buddhist place of worship where other ritual practices, correspondingly, came to be viewed as acts of usurpation or defilement.

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This connection, however, has not been suggested in the impressive literature on the shrine complex. British initiative for resolving the dispute is also practically unknown. In fact, the explosive situation that developed in those years has most often been understood within a fairly straightforward framework in which primary emphasis has been given to the umbrage experienced and expressed by devout Buddhists, reacting to incidents of 'desecration' by a Saiva priest and Hindu pilgrims at the shrine.

My intention here is simply to suggest that the Bodh Gaya question is not capable of being read from such a simple perspective. Instead, it is better perceived in terms of wider, specifically nineteenth-century, social and political situations. This essay will try to demonstrate that there were groups, themselves products of a Buddhist revival, who used a new pan-Asian axis to push forward an agenda in which the historical evolution of the religious complex was ignored. In this, demands were articulated through modes that were selective, which excluded 'inconvenient' histories. This coincided with an imperial initiative which, contrary to the principle that the British government did not interfere in matters of religion, invested great prestige and energy in the dispute. This imperial vision also tried to culturally homogenize the shrine by viewing it only in terms of the moment of its birth. Finally, as the essay shall argue, Buddhist relics and shrines were used to publicize what the Indian government thought was a more cultured image of imperial rule.

Preliminary Formulations: Patronage, Proprietorship, and Colonial Intentions

Before discussing aspects of the dispute, some preliminary clarification on Indian religious shrines in general and the Mahabodhi complex in particular may be offered.

One may begin with Mahabodhi's archaeological history in order to get a sense of the shrine's character and patronage. The first temple was built by a powerful royal patron, the Mauryan emperor Ashoka (*c.* 3rd century BC), who also made a pilgrimage to Sambodhi (as he is supposed to have called it). Only a few remnants of

that temple survive, although his gift, the famous *Vajrasana* throne, has endured (Cunningham 1892: 4–7). A few centuries after Ashoka, 'gifts to the king's temple' (*rajapasadachetika*), inscribed on the old stone railing, were added by more ordinary donors, some of whom were women (ibid.: 15–16). Along with various scenes from the life of the Buddha, this railing was adorned with figures of popular Hindu divinities including one of Siva, represented with a snake hanging down from his wrist and the trident on his left side. In explaining this, Beni Madhab Barua suggested that 'the general motive behind these iconic representations was to add to the sanctity, charm and grandeur of the erection in the eyes of the people' (1934: 94). As for the temple itself, if the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang (*c.* seventh century AD) who visited Mahabodhi, is to be believed, it went through a major phase of reconstruction which was undertaken by a Brahman (Beal 1884: 119–20), a detail which is also mentioned in the fourteenth-century AD Burmese inscription which records that 'In lapse of time, having fallen into disrepair, it was rebuilt by a priest named Naik-Mahanta' (Cunningham 1892: 76). What seems equally striking, as Theodor Bloch perceptively pointed out, is that neither the Buddhists who told Hiuen Tsang this story nor the Chinese pilgrim himself considered such a tradition either incredible or absurd (1912: 149). Over time, the manner in which Buddhist patrons venerated Mahabodhi underwent change. While in the first century BC, Kurangi, the wife of King Indragnimitra, donated several pillars, in the seventh century AD, hundreds of cows were given for ensuring that ghee (oil) lamps were regularly lit at the shrine and in the monastery (Ahir 1994: 22, 30).

Along with intense Buddhist veneration, the medieval centuries also witnessed other kinds of worship. Vaishnava worship is suggested both by the addition of the Gaya-mahatmya to the *Vayu Purana* prior to the fourteenth century AD (Hazra 1940: 71), in which the Bodhi-druma (Bodhi tree) was mentioned as part of the Gaya pilgrim circuit (as it still is), and by the presence of Vishnu images of the ninth century AD at Bodh Gaya (Huntington 1984: 97). An inscription of the ninth century also recorded, among

other things, the setting up of a *Chaumukha Mahadeva* (a four-faced phallic emblem of the god Siva) within the boundaries of the temple complex (Cunningham 1892: 3, 63–4). This was set up for the benefit of *snatakas* (Saiva Brahmin scholars) who were 'the inhabitants of Mahabodhi' (*Mahabodhi-nivasinam*) (Barua 1934: 231). These details imply, as also does the site's sculptural wealth encompassing Buddhist images and Hindu ones (Figs 3.2 and 3.3), that there are multiple lineages which inform Bodh Gaya's cultural history. This is a cultural history involving patrons and pilgrims of several types and faiths.

Fig. 3.2: Buddha surrounded by Bodhisattvas

Fig. 3.3: Images of Hindu deities at the Mahabodhi complex

Secondly, Mahabodhi in the nineteenth century was just one of the many places enjoying the worship of people of various faiths. If here there were Buddhist worshippers paying obeisance and Hindu pilgrims offering oblations, this must have been similar to what was encountered at Dayalpur near Delhi where Siva lingas were worshipped in the veranda of a Sikh gurdwara (Fig. 3.4). Hinglaj in Baluchistan is another instance of composite worship where the same goddess was worshipped by Muslims as Bibi Nani and by Hindus as Parvati or Kali (Minchin 1907: 35–8). Most importantly, in the late nineteenth century, the proprietress of Hinglaj was a Muslim woman. This also shows, and this requires emphasis, that there was nothing unique about the fact that the legal proprietor of Mahabodhi was not a Buddhist by faith.

Thirdly, the proprietorship of a Saiva mahant at Bodh Gaya did not create any problems for the conduct of Buddhist worship. As Justice Macpherson of the Calcutta High Court in 1895 put it (Macpherson and Banerjee 1895: 746),

> It does not appear that any hindrance was ever offered to them or that any complaints were ever made by them, and, before the occurrence in question, there is no instance of any disturbance between the

Fig. 3.4: Siva linga on a platform in the veranda of a Sikh gurdwara

Buddhist worshippers and the Hindu Mahants or their subordinates in regard to their respective rights. This fact is of some importance in the present case where each party charges the other with being the aggressor.

Even in September 1903, many years after the dispute began, Denzil Ibbetson, the home member of Lord Curzon's Council, had pointed out to the viceroy that there were no complaints on the part of Buddhist worshippers (*Indian Archaeology 1899–1905*: 298). In fact, Anagarika Dharmapala himself, the man who was

central to the Bodh Gaya dispute, had worshipped many times before the large medieval image of the Buddha in the main shrine and, on his own admission, without opposition (Macpherson and Banerjee 1895: 744) (Fig. 3.5).

Finally, a word about India's rulers. Many of their statements underline that a great deal of money was spent by them for the purpose of architectural restorations at Bodh Gaya. The Bengal government is said to have spent Rs 2 lakh for this purpose between

Fig. 3.5: The image of the Buddha inside the Mahabodhi temple. That it is clothed and gilded is ironic since, among other things, the Maha Bodhi Society in the late nineteenth century actively campaigned against the Mahant of Bodh Gaya for undertaking such practices

1876 and 1884 (*Indian Archaeology 1899–1905*: 219). Thus, they believed, as Ibbetson (ibid.: 298) put it, that 'the present temple owed its existence to us'. Equally important is the fact that they were not the first rulers to have done so; royal missions from the Siwalik area, Ceylon and Burma, the latest in 1877, had also financed restoration there (Ahir 1994: 30–1, 83–94). What was, however, new and unprecedented in the British government's initiative was their view that by repairing Mahabodhi, they also acquired certain rights over it.

Lord Curzon stated this with more candour than most when he said that the acts of restoration at Mahabodhi 'seem to involve the gradual assertion of a co-ordinate authority, with power, if not to dispose of the shrine or to expropriate the Mahanth, at least to superintend his superintendence and to control his control' (*Indian Archaeology 1899–1905*: 230). Thus the architectural conservation of Mahabodhi was permeated with the same ideological rationale as imperial rule—'reconstitute the native as someone to be ruled and managed' (Said 1994: 158). In case 'natives' refused to be easily 'managed' then the state, in the name of salvaging India's archaeological heritage, could consider using legislation for taking over the management of religious shrines in order to ensure the 'proper conduct of worship'. That in this case 'proper conduct of worship' was defined not in terms of customary forms of worship but with reference to textual notions of Buddhism will be discussed subsequently.

Buddhist Revival and the Beginnings of the Dispute

Moving on to the dispute itself which began in the last decade of the nineteenth century, one of the questions which may be posed is—why these particular years? Different types of pilgrims, after all, had been coming to Bodh Gaya for well over a thousand years while the legal proprietorship of Taradih village and the shrine complex was granted to a mahant in 1727. Then, what is it about the nineteenth century which will help us understand why the

multi-religious character of Mahabodhi, with its ancient antecedents, came to be regarded as evidence of the shrine's desecration?

In order to answer this question it is necessary to draw attention to the fact that the dispute was born in the midst of a general Buddhist revival in Asia, a revival which encompassed several regions including Burma, Thailand, and Ceylon. This does not mean that prior to this Buddhism was either inactive or on the decline. 'Revival' is only used here to describe a process of change, in many cases marked by attempts to bring Buddhism into conformity with its early doctrines and also establishing links among groups of believers and sympathizers in Asia and in the West.

Before expanding on the character of this revival, it is perhaps necessary to point out that nineteenth-century Buddhism at no point, not even after the impact of reform movements, could be described as a religion that was defined exclusively by an ancient canon. Thai Buddhism, for instance, was marked by the cult of the *phi* and the *chao* (the spirits of the dead), cults centring around Brahminical gods and demons and practices relating to spirit doctors, magicians, cabbalists, etc. (Ling 1979). Burmese Buddhism also encompassed a variety of religious observances, many of which enjoyed royal patronage. King Bodawpaya (1782–1819) is known to have sent two persons qualified in witchcraft to perform magical rites at the Maha Muni temple before he attacked Arakan (Ling 1979: 49). In many other northern Asiatic countries as well Buddhism was marked by various tantric practices as also the worship of a variety of gods and goddesses that were strikingly similar to their Brahmanical counterparts (Getty 1914). While some scholars, Austin Waddell for example, tried to suggest that this was due to the influence of Hindu tantrism, others have argued (see Govinda 1956: 362) that the Buddhist tantric system had crystallized by the end of the third century AD and, thus, pre-dated its Hindu counterpart.

At the same time, colonial contact here, as elsewhere, disrupted traditional patterns of belief and worship. In this specific case, the impact (or challenge?) of Christian missionaries was of special significance and led to important changes in the definition and

practice of Buddhism among influential circles of believers. These developments have generally been described as 'revival' movements.

While the details of such reforms across South and Southeast Asia cannot be summarized here, some common patterns in these revivals are worth highlighting. For one, there was a systematic emphasis on reordering Buddhism. This reordering involved attempts to return to orthodox practices and attitudes as contained in Pali sacred texts. Simultaneously, this also involved explaining away the historical evolution of Buddhism in the intervening centuries as the 'degeneration' of the religion. An instance in point is Thailand where Mongkut, who subsequently became the king of Thailand, set up a school of monks known as the Dhammayut monks (those who adhere to the Dhamma or law of the Buddha). The purpose of this school was mainly to purge the Sangha of what they understood as the 'non-Buddhist' and folk accretions which had come to be a part of Thai Buddhism. In Burma, during the reign of King Mindon (1852–78), royal patronage promoted Pali orthodoxy, and Trevor Ling has pointed out the similarities between the reforms there and those initiated in Thailand (1979: 65). In Ceylon as well there were various Buddhist fraternities that prescribed adherence to the religion's early principles and doctrines. The point that really emerges from all this is that Dharmapala's perception of Mahabodhi should perhaps be contextualized in relation to these movements for re-establishing a 'pure' Buddhism.

Additionally, the Protestant nature of reforms in these countries owed a great deal to the presence of Christian missions and to the challenge that they offered to Buddhism through education, preaching, the printing press, etc. The situation in Ceylon was particularly confrontationist. Kitsiri Malalgoda (1976: 260) has demonstrated that the Buddhist response to Christianity assumed a coherent form only in the latter half of the nineteenth century and that the outcome of the confrontation was the emulation of the model of Protestant Christianity by Buddhists:

> Noteworthy among the resultant changes were the imitation by the Buddhists of the organisational forms, tactics and expedients of Christian missionary bodies, as also the acquisition of a new militancy,

> which had more in common with the spirit of Christian missionaries of the time than with their own more traditional attitudes towards other religions. In keeping with the same developments were also the process of laicisation, or the involvement of laymen in roles of religious leadership, and its concomitant, the displacement of monks from some of their traditional positions of leadership.

Interestingly, the most important religious leader in the Bodh Gaya dispute, Anagarika Dharmapala, was a Ceylonese layperson, not a monk, and many of the elements outlined above—active intolerance towards unorthodox Buddhist practices and other religions, propagation of a religious agenda through publication and distribution of pamphlets and periodicals, preaching—were very clearly articulated in his person and programme.

Finally, strides in communication in the time of the British Raj greatly facilitated long-distance travel and the dissemination of all kinds of information. On the one hand, these helped in expanding and intensifying the range of influence of various Buddhist groups and, on the other, in forging links among them and with non-Buddhist organizations that were known to be sympathetic to the religion. It is this which helps in contextualizing the support of the Theosophical Society and its founders, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott and Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, to the organizational work of Buddhist societies in Ceylon. Such communication innovations also allowed Dharmapala, in his effort to restore Mahabodhi to the Buddhist community, to address with relative ease and within a couple of years (1891–3) gatherings in Ceylon, India, Rangoon, London, Chicago, and Tokyo (Barua 1981: 84–95). And, it was the same railways and steamships which had facilitated Dharmapala's travels that brought a much larger influx of Buddhist pilgrims and travellers from Asian countries which had experienced revival movements to Sarnath, Bodh Gaya, and other Indian places which were associated with early Buddhism and the life of the Buddha.

The revival across Asia and its implications, in fact, deserve to be the subject of a separate study but, from the perspective of the present essay, it is necessary to move on to 20 January 1891, when Anagarika Dharmapala, the scion of a wealthy Ceylonese family,

first visited Bodh Gaya. Dharmapala was no ordinary devotee worshipping at the shrine; rather he came as a religious crusader in the mould that had become emblematic of Buddhist revivalism (see his biographical sketch in Sangharakshita 1952: 9–65). Since his twenties, he had been deeply influenced both by Megettuvatte Gunananda (1823–90), the leading Buddhist figure at Colombo, and by Olcott and Blavatsky of the Theosophical Society. By the time he came to Bodh Gaya, he had preached over large parts of Ceylon, raised funds for his faith, and been the moving force behind *The Buddhist* (established in 1888), an English weekly concerned with the propagation of Buddhism and which enjoyed a wide circulation.

Dharmapala came to Mahabodhi inspired by Sir Edwin Arnold as well. Arnold was the author of *Light of Asia*, a blank-verse life of the Buddha in eight books. This, after it was published in 1879, went through at least a hundred editions and, more than any other work of the day, drew the attention of the English-speaking people to Buddhism (Almond 1988: 2). Arnold's disgust, which came to be subsequently articulated frequently by others, at what were clearly familiar sights at Mahabodhi is barely disguised in his writings (quoted in Ahir 1994: 100): 'when I sojourned in Buddha Gaya a few years ago, I was grieved to see Mahratta peasants performing "Shraddh" in such a place.' The sight of a Brahmin priest of the Saivite sect, near the Bodhi tree, intoning mantras relating to the oblations offered by Hindu pilgrims to their ancestors was equally distressing for him (ibid.: 99). More importantly, in order to end such 'defiling' practices and make Mahabodhi 'a living and learned centre of purified Buddhism' (quoted in ibid.: 102), Arnold was the first to suggest to Sinhalese Buddhists and to the British authorities that the temple might be, through the intervention of the state, placed in the hands of a representative committee of the Buddhist nations (Barua 1981: 81). Right from the beginning, Dharmapala's aim was also to ensure the transfer of the custody of the main shrine of Mahabodhi from an Indian legal proprietor to Buddhists from Ceylon, Thailand, and Japan.

Inspired by this message, Dharmapala visited Bodh Gaya and later in that year he founded in Colombo the 'Maha Bodhi Society'.

One of the objects of this society was to reclaim the Mahabodhi temple for the Buddhists. While Mahabodhi had been in the possession of mahants since 1727, it had never been converted into a Hindu temple. Buddhist pilgrims had free access and liberty to worship in it. So at least one fact appears to be certain: the question was not of worship, it was of legal control. A reading of Dharmapala's diary also underlines this. An entry of 30 June 1893 reads (cf. Valisinha 1950: 351): 'Got up early morning and meditated. Yes, the land must be got. The Temple without the land is head without the body. If we get the land the Temple being public property it will always be ours.'

Legal control was attempted through various ways. Initially, Dharmapala hoped to acquire the custody of Mahabodhi through a dialogue with Hem Narayan Giri, the mahant of Bodh Gaya. This continued well into 1893 when Dharmapala was joined by Colonel Olcott (by then an honorary director of the Maha Bodhi Society) in his attempt to persuade Krishna Dayal Gir, the successor of Hem Narayan. The mahant, however, refused to either sell or give a lease. Simultaneously, other sorts of pressures were brought to bear on Mahabodhi's proprietor ranging from public appeals to the organization by Dharmapala of an international Buddhist conference in October 1891, attended by delegates from Sri Lanka, Japan, China, and Chittagong. This conference also resolved to approach the mahant with a Japanese proposal for the purchase of the temple (Barua 1981: 91).

Since these attempts failed, Dharmapala decided to enshrine an image of the Buddha in the upper-floor chamber of the temple. This image was procured from Japan and was 'to be for many years the storm-centre of the battle for Buddha-Gaya' (Sangharakshita 1952: 48). In 1894, Dharmapala announced that this would be placed in the temple on 19th May in the presence of the collector of Gaya. As the Calcutta High Court Proceedings record (Macpherson and Banerjee 1895: 744):

> There was no authority for the latter part of the announcement and the Mahant had not been consulted. The latter, learning of the intended installation by Dharmapala, objected to it and closed the temple down

> to prevent it. This he afterwards opened in compliance with an order of the District Magistrate made under section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code. It was mentioned in the order that no image would be set up in the temple that night without the Mahant's consent, and the Magistrate at the same time sent a demi-official letter to Dharmapala, in consequence of which he desisted from placing the image.

Notwithstanding this, on 25 February 1895, Dharmapala made an attempt to enshrine the image. This was resisted; fist fights were followed by a criminal litigation which was eventually decided against Dharmapala in August 1895. According to the Calcutta High Court, following his unsuccessful endeavour to obtain a lease on the temple, Dharmapala's attempt to install an image was a covert way of doing what he had failed to do directly and openly, namely, to bring the temple under the control of Buddhist priests (ibid.: 751).

In the meantime, from July 1894, Krishna Dayal Gir began carrying out a systematic Hindu worship of the main image of the Buddha. Understandably, this was considered repugnant by the Maha Bodhi Society. Such worship on the mahant's part, though, was an act of retaliation, a stratagem to strengthen his position against the threat of Dharmapala. As J.A. Bourdillon, lieutenant governeor of Bengal, wrote (*Indian Archaeology 1899–1905*: 307):

> It also appeared that since the misguided attempts of certain members of the Buddhist faith to place by force an image of Buddha in the temple and thus assert and establish a right to the building, efforts had been made by way of retaliation to push and extend the Hindu worship, thus of necessity giving pain and offence to the Buddhists.

Incidentally, what is practically unknown is that while the agenda of the Maha Bodhi Society since its inception was opposed to artefacts of Hindu worship in the temple complex, a worship which, in the case of the Bodhi tree, certainly goes back to the fourteenth century AD, if not earlier, it did formally express its desire to install there some British monarchical symbols. In 1904, Dharmapala had approached Curzon and King Edward VII with a proposal for

perpetuating the memory of Queen Victoria through material additions to Mahabodhi (Dharmapala 1904). These included erection of permanent lights at the central shrine at Bodh Gaya, the construction of a marble altar for her under the sacred Bodhi tree, and, additionally, a hall for Buddhist monks was to be called 'Victoria Memorial Hall'!

A Mediating Viceroy and His Difficult Customer: Curzon and Krishna Dayal Gir

From this narrative of legal proprietors and people claiming to represent the pious, let us move to look at the third element—the imperial government which formally entered the picture when, in 1902, Curzon undertook to resolve the dispute.

One would have expected the viceroy to have acted primarily as Mahabodhi's archaeological guardian since he believed that the conservation of India's monuments was an elementary obligation of the British government, and Mahabodhi was one of the oldest structural temples of India to have survived. Initially, when the examination of the archival papers which this research entailed was started, it was this relationship that I was hoping to uncover. Certainly, in the correspondence there are sections which suggest some archaeological concern on Curzon's part. He is known to have extracted from the mahant a promise to remove what he presumed to be Mauryan pillars from inside his monastery and get the Vajrasana throne installed on the main shrine (*Indian Archaeology 1899–1905*: 335–6). However, it soon became evident that Curzon's interest in and visit to Bodh Gaya were not connected with his ambitious programme of conservation. Rather, these had everything to do with the shrine dispute and its resolution which he hoped to bring about.

The inputs of the imperial and provincial governments can be gauged from the large number of letters, draft resolutions and notes that were exchanged on the Bodh Gaya question. Of these, seventy-two letters and enclosures were included by Curzon in *Indian Archaeology 1899–1905*, covering 120 closely printed pages.

A comprehensive account of even the salient points of such a detailed correspondence would be impossible here. Therefore, only a few important issues that emerge from this viceregal endeavour will be discussed which will help in perceiving it as part of a wider pattern. The resistance offered by Krishna Dayal Gir will also be briefly touched upon.

First of all, Curzon, like the Maha Bodhi Society, regarded the Bodh Gaya temple complex as only a Buddhist shrine. This view of Mahabodhi was premised on a classification of religious complexes in which these were perceived as belonging to only one religion and its community of believers—the religion of the founders of the shrine. The problems that this could and did create for places of worship that had been 'living' shrines for many centuries with different types of histories encoded in them is evident from the case of Mahabodhi itself. At the same time, this is only one example of the various classificatory systems spawned by colonial regimes which were meant to engender and solidify 'ideologies of difference' (see Loomba 1998: 68–9, 107ff.). In such classifications, in addition to the necessity of segregating the rulers and the ruled, there were detailed delineations, in terms of race and culture. These were painstakingly codified and various types of decisions came to be based on such codifications. For example, the division of Indian places of worship into 'Hindu', 'Buddhist', 'Muslim', and so on was consolidated into a reasonably watertight one. Any hybridity, heterogeneity, or blurring of distinctions among these categories, in terms of worship and ritual, was generally seen as evidence of debasement and/or degeneration. Thus, the treatment of the Buddha in Hinduism as an avatara (incarnation) of Vishnu was described as 'one of the most extraordinary moral perversions of which the Brahmin mind has been guilty' (Munro in *Indian Archaeology 1899–1905*: 245). This kind of reading was especially common in treatises relating to ancient Indian monuments. In a masterly '*tour de force*' of the historiography on the Durga temple at Aihole, Gary Michael Tartakov (1997) draws attention to the ways in which the temple's most unique features, because of such conceptual schemes, came to be perceived as somehow wrong.

A relevant example is James Fergusson, for whom the apsidal plan could only be a Buddhist form. Because the Durga temple had a semicircular west end, it was, therefore, understood by him as 'an inglorious, structural version of a Buddhist caitya hall, appropriated by Brahmanical Hindus' (Tartakov 1997: 6).

The foregoing helps in understanding Curzon's vision. Bodh Gaya, for him, was only a Buddhist shrine, 'intended for the accommodation of Buddhist images and Buddhist worship' (*Indian Archaeology 1899–1905*: 228). While the oblations of Hindu devotees at the Bo tree, one of the forty-five sacred spots in the Gaya tour of pilgrimage, were grudgingly acknowledged not as a traditional practice but as an 'interest', it was viewed disparagingly (ibid.): 'this interest has developed into something approaching a right, owing to the proprietary advantages enjoyed by the Mahant.' For Curzon, this was a site of Buddhist origin which 'since passed into Hindu hands', because of which a Hindu priest 'appropriated Buddhist offerings to a Buddhist shrine' (Curzon 1902: 3). Nowhere does he choose to refer to features connected with Bodh Gaya's archaeology and history or to the fact that these clearly attested to the antiquity of its mixed pilgrim traffic. This is interesting and important for those who have followed and admired Curzon's deep interest in Indian monuments. Clearly, this particular monument's past had to be marginalized in order to resolve its current dispute, given that this past did not fit in with the rigid division of religious shrines as conceived by the imperial state.

The viceroy's understanding of the temple complex may also have been shaped by the manner in which Buddhism was recreated in Great Britain in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In his important work *The British Discovery of Buddhism*, Philip Almond traced the various phases through which Buddhism and nineteenth-century discourses about it were constructed and the ways in which these were determined by Victorian culture. What is particularly relevant is that by the 1850s Buddhism came to be understood as a religion that was best viewed from an analysis of its texts rather than its current practices. This textual past, incidentally, was progressively collected, translated, and published by Western scholars and institutes. So, as Almond (1988: 13) puts it, 'by the middle of

the century, the Buddhism that existed "out there" was beginning to be judged by a West that alone knew what Buddhism was, is and ought to be'. From this perspective of an ideal textual Buddhism, contemporary Buddhism in the East was seen as being in a general state of decay (ibid.: 37). Curzon's views on Mahabodhi, based as they were on what it was originally, rather than on how it had evolved, fit in with this Victorian conception of the religion.

Finally, Curzon's initiative has to be understood with reference to the 'cultured' image of the British Raj that was sought to be propagated from around the turn of the twentieth century. For instance, around 1899, following the discovery of the stupa at Piprahwa on the border of Nepal, the relics of Gautama Buddha which were enshrined there were offered by the Indian government to the king of Thailand, and received on his behalf with due ceremonial by Phya Sukhum, Royal Siamese commissioner of the Ligor Circle at Gorakhpur. That this was an event which carried all the trappings of a diplomatic visit is vividly captured in the records of the Home Department. The address of W. Hoey, commissioner of the Gorakhpur division, underlines the diplomatic significance of the occasion (1899a: 14):

> As an Englishman I feel that the nation to which I belong must view with satisfaction the fact that its past relations with His Majesty the King of Siam have always been friendly, and the ceremony which has brought us together today is a proof of good will and of a desire that those relations should continue to be friendly.

A special railway saloon carriage was placed at the disposal of Phya Sukhum, who also stayed at Hoey's private residence during his visit and is said to have enjoyed the annual fancy dress ball at the Gorakhpur Club with him. Most significantly, on 16th February, leading government officials and heads of departments gathered at the shamiana where the Piprahwa relics were formally handed over to the Royal Commissioner (Hoey 1899b: 12–14). More than anything else, in view of the extraordinary significance of the event, the failure of the British government to invite any Buddhists is worth noting. The ashes of the bones of the

Buddha for the British Raj, in this instance, were only instruments for diplomatic goodwill.

From a heritage perspective, one could argue that these should have been preserved in or around Piprahwa. Even if the government had wished to hand them over, they could have been offered to Buddhists in British India—for instance, to the nine million Buddhists in Burma. But the king of Thailand was chosen and this choice was not incidental. After all, British colonial expansion had ensured that the Buddhist kingdom of Burma was ruthlessly overpowered in 1885, King Thibaw deported, and Upper Burma annexed formally to British India in January 1886. That meant that the only remaining orthodox Buddhist monarch of Southeast Asia with whom the British Raj could deal on an equal, ruler-to-ruler, basis was the Thai king. So, precious archaeological relics were given away as a proof of the good will of Great Britain, and as a practical illustration of the sympathy of the British government towards the faiths of others.

One imagines that in addressing the issue of Bodh Gaya, Curzon was also moved by similar considerations. Bourdillon in fact suggested to Curzon that at a time when British India's relations with China and Tibet were strained, a spontaneous concession to the Buddhists at Mahabodhi would have a tremendous beneficial effect (*Indian Archaeology 1899–1905*: 303–4). In another context, shortly after Curzon's visit to Bodh Gaya, the political mileage that was to be gained from compromise between the viceroy and the mahant had also been highlighted by C.E.A. Oldham, the collector of Gaya. In suggesting that the temple be handed over by the mahant to the government, Oldham wrote (ibid.: 236):

> I then pointed out what an unique occasion this was for doing an act of grace and justice. It was the month in which the proclamation of their Imperial Majesties had been celebrated with such enthusiasm, and then there was the auspicious occasion of the visit of His Majesty's representative, His Excellency the Viceroy. No fitter occasion could present itself.

That the mahant was not moved by such a consideration is another matter.

In any case, in his resolve to find a solution, Curzon explored a number of possibilities. Initially, as has been mentioned earlier, Curzon suggested an agreement by which the shrine would be held in trust by the government: 'The shrine should not be handed over to the Buddhists as their property, since the Government has no desire to oust one proprietor merely in order to install another, but would be held in trust by Government, who would issue regulations for the proper conduct of Buddhist worship there' (ibid.: 232). This scheme was premised on the creation of exclusive areas of worship in the temple complex—visitation rights but no worship by Hindus inside the temple, the western Bodhi tree reserved for Buddhists, the second Bodhi tree reserved for Hindus (ibid.: 232). Subsequently, because Krishna Dayal Gir backed out, after promising acquiescence, the viceroy set up an informal commission, made up of Justice S.C. Mitra and Hara Prasad Shastri, to enquire into the nature of Hindu worship there and 'whether such worship as is carried on is genuine, orthodox and worthy of commendation' (ibid.: 308). The findings of the commissioners did not match up to the viceroy's expectations. While they did not find any evidence of regular and continuous worship of the image of the Buddha inside the temple prior to 1894, they discovered that local people had been in the habit of making votive offerings in the main shrine much prior to the dispute and also that Hindu offerings were made at both the trees, that is, the tree at the back of the temple and at the pipal tree to the north (ibid.: 257–8).

Notwithstanding their recommendations and various draft agreements and also Curzon's threat that Mahabodhi could be taken over through legislation, Krishna Dayal Gir was obdurate and refused to negotiate seriously. There is no doubt that this came at the end of a long process during which he did give his qualified consent on many occasions, which was quickly withdrawn every time, almost simultaneously. That this was a serious rebuff to Curzon is also not in doubt. As he put it, 'my absence from the scene did not, however, entitle the Mahanth to make a series of promises and then one after the other to break them. Such a line of action was not only discreditable to himself, it was also disrespectful and insulting to me' (ibid.: 273–4). There is, in fact, every

reason to believe that the mahant of Bodh Gaya did not in any honesty, notwithstanding his frequent reiteration of loyalty to the British government, attempt to seriously effect a compromise on the issue.

But at the end of this story about an important phase in the recent history of Mahabodhi, what seems striking is that Krishna Dayal Gir was the only one who put forward a resistance premised on the multi-religious character of this shrine and similar shrines in India. Apart from his rhetorical statement, 'the temple and its vicinity were all Hindu, and the inmates of the place were also Hindu', he eloquently stated his reasons for being so uncompromising. As he put it, while there were other Indian temples, like Mahabodhi, where worship was carried on by men of different sects and religious faiths, nowhere had the British government desired to exercise control or superintendence as they were trying to in the case of Mahabodhi. His statement, citing examples where people of various faiths worshipped, often in their own ways, is worth quoting (ibid.: 319–20):

> . . . the renowned Durgah, or tomb, of Ata Saheb in Ajmer Rajputana, is daily visited by numberless Hindu and Muhammadan pilgrims from different parts of the country simultaneously; the shrine on the Observatory Hills at Darjeeling is regarded as a very sacred spot by the Hindus (of all classes) and the Buddhists, each performing their worship in accordance with their own faith; the Hindus offer sacrifices of animals too; the temple of Bodh in Nepal is a place of great sanctity to the Hindus and Buddhists, where both the sects perform their worship without the least friction . . . But the object of so-called religious crusaders is quite different from that of bonafide pilgrims, viz. to create certain rights over the shrine and thereby to cause a friction and disturbance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, one acknowledges with sadness that whereas Bodh Gaya could have been a living example of shared religious tolerance and worship, which is what its archaeological history also pointed to, its distinctive character was destroyed because of the larger

politics of the parties involved—a group committed to a programme of Buddhist revival, a viceroy obsessed with an imperial agenda, and the retaliatory tactics of a Saiva priest. Even more sobering is the knowledge that the shrine's multiple and frequently overlapping historical strands were, at best, considered irrelevant, and, at worst, were deliberately marginalized in religious agendas and political programmes.

A case study like this also shows that disputes around religious monuments in the Indian subcontinent have a long history and, consequently, these have to be understood in terms of their own particular contexts. From the particularities of some of these disputes emerges the knowledge, and the hope, that the resolution of such disputes does not always destroy composite patronage. In another part of India, around the time that the Bodh Gaya dispute escalated, a long-standing quarrel among the Jainas and Hindu Vaishnavas was amicably resolved. The Bawangaza mandir dispute was resolved not through the judicial machinery of the British Raj but by the diwan of the local princely ruler. His solution was one in which, unlike Mahabodhi, the multiple strands of Bawangaza were recognized and strengthened.

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4

Delhi: Memorializing 1857

Introduction

> Delhi, the focus of the treason and revolt which for four months have harassed Hindustan, and the stronghold in which the mutinous army of Bengal has sought to concentrate its power, has been wrested from the rebels. (Canning 1857a)

IN THE SUMMER OF 1857, A SEPOY MUTINY BROKE out in Meerut (some 50 kilometres north-east of Delhi), which was the headquarters of a division of the Bengal army. In less than a day, by the early hours of the morning of 11 May, the Meerut mutineers, crossing the bridge of boats on the Yamuna river, reached Delhi. The garrison there revolted almost immediately, many British residents were massacred, and Bahadur Shah II, the Mughal king who resided in Delhi, accepted the nominal leadership of the rebellion. This acted as a catalyst for other revolts and, in the following days and months, there were outbreaks in stations across North and Central India. As it spread, the army revolt was transformed into a popular uprising as peasants, local notables, and urban groups, cutting across castes and creeds, joined together to fight firanghi (foreigner) rule. In the intensely fought

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military campaigns, however, superior tactics and organization eventually triumphed. British authority was re-established with ruthless force by the end of 1858, in Delhi as early as September 1857. As a consequence of the rebellion, East India Company rule was abolished and India came to be directly administered by the British Crown.

Surmises about whether the mutiny was triggered by the fear of religious pollution from the animal grease on the cartridges of the new Enfield rifle, speculations concerning the social and economic reasons for the civil rebellion, and also the diametrically different perspectives on how this major moment of dislocation ought to be characterized have generated a vast and impressive literature (for an annotated bibliography of such writings, see Jain 1998). The intention of this essay, though, is more limited. Its focus is on the physical impact of the revolt in the city of Delhi. This has been studied through a field survey of what are generally described as 'mutiny' sites and monuments in north Delhi, along with the archival sources, especially those files of the Archaeological Survey of India and the office of the deputy commissioner of Delhi that deal with monuments and their status in the aftermath of the revolt.

While the historic remains of several Delhis lie scattered across the long, narrow strip of country running along the right bank of the Yamuna river, the geographical nucleus of the 1857 events was much smaller. It was largely concentrated in and around Shahjahanabad, the roughly 6400 acres enclosed by a wall and built as the Mughal capital by Emperor Shah Jahan in the seventeenth century, and that section of the rocky eminence of the Aravallis, known as the northern Ridge, where the British cantonments were located. The revolt here and the city's defence by the rebels did not last long—a little more than four months. Yet, this was a crucial arena of resistance in more ways than one. That practically all other uprisings followed the liberation of Delhi suggests that the expulsion of the British from the city was understood as signalling the breakdown of their authority. From the British perspective as well, the recovery of Delhi was thought to be crucial because they believed that if they conquered it without loss of time 'the rest of

India might be saved' (Sen 1957: 77). Above all, the revolt was a major watershed in terms of urban morphology and transformed the city's terrain. This was the result, on the one hand, of the destruction of what each perceived to be the political stronghold of the 'other' and, in the aftermath of the British conquest, of the construction of a remembered past around sites of the rebellion.

There was, however, a qualitative difference in the manner in which the revolt was memorialized. While the British commemoration of their victory was deliberate, creating, as it were, a palpable 'landscape of heroism and conquest' that can be archaeologically located, hardly any physical traces of the resistance offered by Delhi's residents exist. A populace that has been brutally suppressed cannot be expected either to commemorate sites of resistance or to set up memorials. At the same time, much of what was destroyed and constructed in the aftermath of the revolt also had an afterlife. There were shifts in monument usage, architectural alterations, and epigraphic additions, which in turn were connected with attitudinal changes within the British Raj and subcontinental contestations. It is this which allows us to view the memorialized arena as being an ensemble both of its construction chronology and its reception history. This is important for other reasons as well. For instance, it is primarily through the contestation of the landscape of revolt that the Indian state's remembrance can be archaeologically recovered. A more positive invocation of the Delhi rebels and their resistance, however, has not taken place, a 'monumental' amnesia which demands scrutiny since various other commemorative monuments have sprung up in the city. The purpose of this essay, therefore, is as much to discuss those aspects of social memory that came to be archaeologically inscribed as those which have remained uncommemorated.

Destruction and Demolition in Delhi

For more than half a century before the revolt, from 1803 onwards, while the administration of Delhi was in the name of the Mughal monarch who resided there, his jurisdiction remained limited to

his palace—the Lal Qila or Red Fort. The British had become the masters of Delhi—administering justice, collecting revenue, repairing its fortifications, improving the city's sanitary arrangements, and maintaining peace and order (Gupta 1981: 4–20; see also Frykenberg 1993). Thus, when the revolt broke out in 1857, the rebels squarely targeted such symbols of British authority; the pattern of killings, loot, and plunder suggests this.

'Property owned, used or lived in by the firanghi' (Mukherjee 2001: 71) was attacked and looted—the Delhi Bank in Chandni Chowk, houses of Europeans in localities like Daryaganj and the Kashmir Bazaar, Metcalfe House where Theophilus Metcalfe, the joint magistrate, lived, and the British army cantonments were some of them. Bulwarks of British power were also taken over: the treasury, which was plundered and its contents surrendered to the king, the jail, from which all prisoners were released, and the Main Guard, which was captured by mutinous soldiers (Haq 1968: 119). Controlling the Main Guard was important because it stood adjacent to the Kashmere Gate, which was the most important exit point connecting the walled city and the Ridge where the cantonments were located. The rebels attempted to seize the contents of the powder magazines as well, but in this they were only partially successful (ibid.: 123). While the walls of the smaller magazine inside the city, known as the Expense magazine (with fifty barrels of powder), were being scaled, it was blown up by the English staff. On the other hand, the main powder magazine, containing more than 1000 barrels of powder, which was situated outside the city walls, on the bank of the Yamuna river, was successfully captured.

Church property too was attacked, fuelled by the belief that the British were bent on destroying Hinduism and Islam through the propagation of Christianity. The most visible symbol of this was the first church built in Delhi in 1837, St James's. Although the building was not seriously damaged, it was 'plundered by a wild and screaming mob that bore away all its contents down to the chairs, stools and hassocks and rang the bells in mockery before cutting them loose so that they fell through the tower to the floor'

(Hibbert 1978: 99). The cross and the gilded ball which adorned the top of the dome of the church were repeatedly fired at 'in the hope that by their fall might be ensured the expulsion of the English' (Hearn 1906: 5). A few tombs in the church complex were also vandalized, including a handsome one which Colonel James Skinner in 1835 had himself had erected over the remains of William Fraser, formerly a major of Skinner's Horse and a resident of the city. As for the Baptist Mission of Delhi, it was totally destroyed, and two of its British ministers were killed, as was the first 'leading' Indian resident of the city who had been converted by the mission, Dr Chaman Lal (*Gazetteer of the Delhi District* 1884: 58).

The pattern of violence seen in Delhi was very similar to that of Meerut cantonment before Delhi (Palmer 1966: 88ff.) and, afterwards, in various stations in Awadh (Mukherjee 2001: 71ff.). What I want to underline, however, is simply this: instead of labelling it as mindless mob fury, as several commentators have done, it is possible to detect a 'method' in the 'madness' that accompanied the revolt. As a definitive work on the revolt in Awadh puts it, 'the sepoys saw in the Raj an entity and structure that was intervening in their way of life and they frontally assaulted and destroyed the proximate symbols of that structure' (ibid.: 71).

If the attacks on and the capture of buildings that symbolized the British presence in Delhi are to be understood as a means by which the rebels publicly underlined their victory, what was the 'purpose' in the orgy of violence unleashed by the British troops as they captured the city?

This happened in September 1857 when four military columns simultaneously attacked the city. All through the siege of Delhi, the British soldiers on the Ridge, which they had recaptured in June, had kept their morale high by dreaming of the moment when they would attack and loot '"a nice diamond or two" from the "rich old niggers"' (Gupta 1981: 21). Naturally, when the city was stormed, there was widespread plunder and destruction, especially since three days of unrestricted loot were 'allowed' to the army (Haq 1968: 232). After three days, plundering assumed a different

shape: the property of Delhi residents came to be legally treated as prize and official digging tickets were given to specially appointed Prize Agents. Armed with these and with 'guides, coolies, pickaxes, shovels, tape-measures, crowbars, and iron sounding-rods, officers, civilians and their wives went out on treasure-hunts all over the city' (Hibbert 1978: 320). This official search for and appropriation of private property ended only in December 1857.

Whether the plundering was officially sanctioned or indiscriminately done, the whole city came to be treated as legitimate spoil. Following the example of medieval invaders who had marked their victory over the Mughals by carrying off treasure from their palace, British soldiers plundered whatever they could find in the Red Fort—portable artefacts, ranging from the jewels, weapons, and clothes of the royal family to *in situ* marble slabs and inlay work. While the copper gilt domes of the Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Special Audience), the Musamman Burj and Moti Masjid (Pearl Mosque) were sold by auction (Hearn 1906: 14), property worth Rs 10,000 was dug out of the Sriramji temple by the Prize Agents (Sen 1957: 114). Elsewhere in the city, too, soldiers and officers were equally thorough. One of them, Captain Griffiths (cited in ibid.: 319), recounted:

> We entered several of the large houses belonging to the wealthier class of natives and found every one in the same condition, turned inside out, their ornaments torn to pieces, costly articles, too heavy to remove, battered into fragments . . . To my certain knowledge many soldiers of the English regiments got possession of jewellery and gold ornaments taken from the bodies of the slain city inhabitants, and I was shown by men of my regiment strings of pearls and gold mohurs which had fallen into their hands.

Much of this treasure became the property of those who had discovered it, mementos of their victory over the 'enemy'. This was especially common among those who had become fugitives after the revolt in Delhi. The family of George Wagentreiber, for instance, who worked at the *Delhi Gazette*, had escaped from their house outside the city walls in May 1857 and fled to Karnal. But

they soon returned, with Wagentreiber being appointed as one of the agents of the 'Delhi Prize'. Eventually their house outside Delhi was rebuilt, filled, as one of them recounted, 'from floor to ceiling with all the wonderful things collected in those eventful days' (cited in ibid.: 320). The Delhi loot also reached England since a large number of British non-commissioned officers and soldiers bought their discharge following the end of the revolt. Just as in the early part of the nineteenth century, 'colony-returned' British gentlemen carried back historic artefacts as mementos of their Indian experience, now 'mutiny' veterans brought home their trophies of conquest. Several such trophies found their way into British museums. Among the most famous of these were the rare *pietra dura* panels that formed the backdrop to the throne of the emperor in the Diwan-i-Am in the Red Fort (Fig. 4.1). The pilfered panels included the top central one, an Italian product, which depicted Orpheus playing his lute and wild animals seated before him. These had been taken away by Captain John Jones in 1857 and were bought

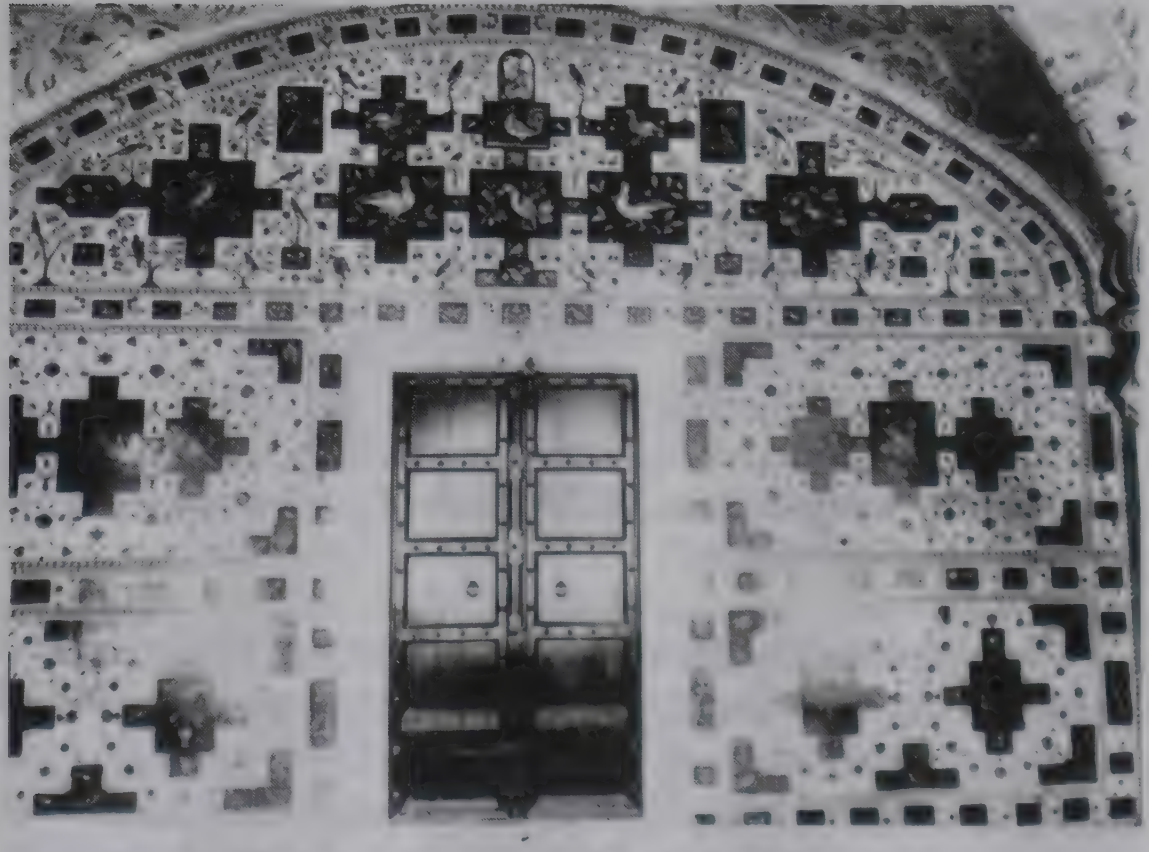

Fig. 4.1: The *pietra dura* panels of the Hall of General Audience (Diwan-i-Am), looted by Captain Jones in 1857 and restored in 1903

by the British government for £500 when Jones returned to England. They soon became part of the collection of Indian artefacts in the Kensington Museum (now known as the Victoria and Albert Museum).

The sack of Delhi was one aspect of the impact that this violent confrontation had on the material culture of the city. Its intentional 'desacralization' (Cohn 1987: 646) was the other aspect, as the original functions and layouts of some of the most important buildings and city quarters were deliberately altered. The Red Fort, the symbol of the city's resistance, was brutally metamorphosed. Major clearances were made in its interior, the object of which 'was to open out wholesome space for occupation of the Fort by European Barracks and the other regiments of the garrison' (Secretary Punjab 1863). Many buildings of 'minor' value, which could not be profitably used or were deemed as unworthy of being preserved, were demolished. The grounds were also levelled and the debris from these clearances was used to form the glacis around the Fort walls. Barracks were constructed in large parts of the Fort while historic buildings were converted to suit the functions of the garrison there. Officers were quartered in the Naqqar Khana (Drum House), the Zafar Mahal was used as a bath for soldiers while wooden doors and iron gratings were put up in the Diwan-i-Am. Cookhouses, privies, and urinals were built in various parts of the historic complex, near the Zafar Mahal, in the Hayat Baksh garden itself, and also west of the Sawan and Bhadon pavilions (Marshall 1902).

The changes outside the Fort were even more dramatic and involved the clearing of buildings within a 450 yard radius of its walls. A vivid visual evocation of the surgical demolition that this involved can be had by comparing the photographs taken by Felice Beato in 1858, before the clearances, with how it presently appears (see Masselos and Gupta 2000: 20ff.). As those photographs show, an unfortunate casualty was the seventeenth-century Akbarabadi Masjid, built by and named after one of Emperor Shah Jahan's wives. Historic markets such as Urdu Bazaar and Khas Bazaar, through which the emperor had proceeded in state to the Jama Masjid on feast days, and also squares like the one named after

S'a-ad-ullah Khan, the prime minister of Shah Jahan, were razed. This was apparently done for military reasons, to remove what was described as 'dangerous cover', but, as Gupta caustically observes, 'what the Government decided was necessary for its security led to some of the loveliest buildings of the city being destroyed'. Fortunately, a small elegant mosque, Sunehri Masjid, near the Delhi Gate of the palace, escaped demolition, apparently because it offered very little 'cover' (Deputy Commissioner 1871). What also survived was the Dariba, a locality which fell within the 500 yard radius from which buildings had to be cleared. It was retained because it was thought to be impolitic to alienate its Hindu merchants and shopkeepers, who had petitioned Governor General Canning (Secretary 1860). In order to prevent the demolition of the Dariba, the radius of clearance around the fort was reduced to 450 yards.

Intentional desacralization was writ large over the city mosques as well. Although Sunehri Masjid had not been demolished, it was confiscated by the British government because it formed part of the precincts of the royal buildings. Within a short distance of the Fort stood the Jama Masjid, the largest congregational mosque of Delhi. Officially closed down for public worship, for a short while it was placed at the disposal of Sikh soldiers—to be used as barracks by them. South of the Fort, the Zinat-ul-Masajid was confiscated by the military authorities (Fig. 4.2). One of the most impressive mosques in the city, it was converted into a bakery for troops by the Commissariat Department. Unsightly additions were subsequently made to it so that it could also be partly used as a dwelling house (Officer 1890). Another kind of desecration took place at the Fatehpuri mosque which lay towards the western end of Chandni Chowk. The mosque was confiscated and its shops and quadrangle were sold, in public auction, to Chunna Mal, one of the richest Hindu bankers of the city. The rooms opening into its quadrangle, meant for students of religious books, were converted into shops by the new proprietor (Deputy Commissioner 1877). The Sadruddin mosque in the Sabzi Mandi (vegetable market) area was similarly treated. This masjid and the garden in which it

Fig. 4.2: Zinat-ul-Masajid in 1858

stood belonged to Maulvi Sadruddin Khan but were sold, after the revolt, as confiscated property, to one Jauhari Mal. The masjid was later occupied as a dwelling house by a 'European' (ibid.).

Retribution was not confined to the walled city. As a penal measure, large numbers of plots of agricultural land from as many as thirty-three villages of Delhi district were confiscated: Alipur, Chandrawal, Kotla Mubarakpur, Mehrauli, Indraprastha, Palam, Raisina, and Wazirabad are some of these villages (Gupta 1981: 31). While the cause of confiscation of the land of Chandrawal was that the village had plundered the cantonments, the land of

Alipur village was confiscated because its proprietors had 'plundered the high road during the war' (Temple 1858). The confiscated rural property was large—in Chandrawal, two-thirds of the land of the village was confiscated, while at Wazirpur and Alipur more than half the village lands were taken away. Such measures transformed Delhi's social geography; it was alleged that a great deal of this land was given as reward for 'loyal service' or was bought by persons who were not residents of the villages.

When this campaign of confiscation and demolition was finally over, what remained was a battered and mutilated city. The victorious British forces had virtually treated the entire population as culpable of treason and ensured that their punishment left a lasting physical impact. There was very little that a conquered populace could do except remember and lament, frequently in ways that cannot be fathomed from the material evidence. A poignant reminder of this comes from the experience of a missionary who, on one occasion, instructed his class of catechists to write an essay on the mutiny, in response to which every youth submitted a sheet of blank paper. 'It was a silent, unanimous and unapologetic refusal to perform the task' (Thompson 1926: 120). While this strongly invokes the bitter memory of the revolt and substantiates Thompson's observation that 'at the back of the mind of many an Indian the mutiny flits as he talks with an Englishman—an unavenged and unappeased ghost' (ibid.: 30), social remembrance in such situations rarely leaves behind material traces.

Such remembrance does, however, occasionally attach itself to the landscape of events. And so, since the revolt, the stone vaulted gateway which stands south of the walled city of Delhi, opposite Firoz Shah Kotla, came to be associated with bloodshed and murder. Originally called Kabuli Darwaza (Kabul gateway), its popular name after the 1857 events is Khuni Darwaza (bloody gateway). This is derived from the fact that Emperor Bahadur Shah's sons were first stripped and then killed there by Captain Hodson (Fig. 4.3) (Nanda *et al.* 1999, I: 182). This sobriquet, incidentally, imitated the name of the other gateway called Khuni Darwaza which stood near Dariba in Chandni Chowk. That too had been so named because it was the site of a ferocious massacre when the

Fig. 4.3: Painting which depicts Captain Hodson's slaying of the Mughal princes

city's inhabitants had been killed in large numbers by Nadir Shah, the eighteenth-century Persian invader (Hasan 1916, I: 123–4). More than anything else, this suggests that Delhi's residents viewed the British celebration of their conquest of the city as something which replicated the bloodshed and plunder that followed in the wake of medieval conquerors.

Memorializing the Revolt

If the 1857 destruction and demolition physically altered Delhi, the construction by the victors of sites of remembrance and commemoration on the 'mutiny' landscape—from the graves of the dead to memorials around episodes of the revolt—was equally transfiguring. One does not have to be a specialist in symbolism to realize that some of these sites can be read as ideological statements, where the monuments, and epigraphs inscribed on them, contributed to the construction of one of the archetypal myths of British India, that of sacrifice and bravery 'selflessly' displayed for a larger cause. At least that is how the monuments were packaged by guidebooks for the English travellers who visited Delhi. For example,

Gordon Risley Hearn's *The Seven Cities of Delhi* devoted its first chapter to an itinerary for travellers in and around the city's 'mutiny' sites so that they could visualize 'the story of this strenuous struggle by which India was saved' (1906: 20).

No visible agenda, though, can be discerned in the spatial distribution of the mutiny dead. A separate military cemetery for the British army men who died in the revolt was not set up; their graves are dispersed over a large area. A few of them were buried near the scenes of military action where they were killed, such as Captain G.C.M. Barnett and Lieutenant Alexander William Murray, who both died on 14 September. While Barnett was buried alone, south of the Ridge, Murray was interred near the Pir Ghaib observatory on the Ridge. This was not always so. Colonel C. Chester, for instance, who was killed by the first discharge of the rebel guns at the battle of Badli-ki-Sarai, was buried in the military cemetery near the British cantonments, several miles south of the battle arena. The resting place of the officers who were murdered at the Main Guard of Kashmere Gate was also at some distance from where they had been killed. This is because their bodies were sent by the rebels to the Flagstaff Tower on the Ridge where they remained on a cart till 8 June, when the British forces who reoccupied the Ridge on that day found them. They were accorded a multiple burial near where their bodies were found.

Then there were the chief commanding officers who had died during those fateful four months. One of them, Major General Sir Henry Barnard, was buried in the military cemetery, while the British 'hero' of the Delhi assault, Brigadier-General John Nicholson, was consigned to the Kashmere Gate cemetery. His grave was covered with a large marble slab, which had apparently been taken (or purloined?) from the defeated king's palace (Fig. 4.4). Nicholson was memorialized in other ways as well. Possibly he was the only British officer whose statue was put up in Delhi—across the road from where he was buried, in what came to be called the Nicholson Gardens. Not far from this, near Kabuli Gate, a tablet was also placed behind the battlements which identified this as the place where Nicholson was mortally wounded. The

Fig. 4.4: John Nicholson's grave in 1858

cemetery where he was buried, however, was indifferently provided for. A few years after the revolt, D.P. Williams, Chaplain of Delhi, was shocked to find that many of the graves in the cemetery, especially those of the epidemic victims of 1861, had been disturbed and 'the remains of the dead dragged out by jackals' (Williams 1863). Fortunately for his admirers, Nicholson's mortal remains were untouched because of the solid tombstone that sealed them.

Rather than the distribution of graves, it is the epitaphs on gravestones and memorial tablets that allow us to visualize how the army wanted their dead to be remembered. The epitaphs generally mention the ranks of the soldiers, the contexts in which they died, and the persons who inscribed the messages. The gravestone of Nicholson not only mentioned his age (35) and the day he died (23 September), but also that he had led the assault on Delhi and been mortally wounded 'in the hour of victory'. Details of death, however, were sometimes omitted when the commanding officer had died in less glorious circumstances. General Henry Barnard, for instance, was a Crimean veteran but was new to India and had collapsed in Delhi on 5 July, after a short attack of cholera. Death

through disease must have been an embarrassing circumstance to record on the gravestone of the officer who commanded the Delhi force. The inscription on his grave therefore mentioned only that he died 'when in chief command of the troops besieging Delhi' (Fanshawe 1902: 80).

The brevity of the epitaphs on the graves of Barnard and Nicholson contrasts sharply with several other memorial inscriptions. An example of an elaborate message on stone, for the dead soldiers of the 2nd European Bengal Fusiliers, comes from St James' church. Set up by the regiment, it mentions the names of almost two hundred officers and men who 'in glorious sacrifice to their country' lost their lives in 'the defence of the honour of their beloved Queen and country in avenging their murdered countrymen and women, in crushing a mutiny unrivalled for its atrocities and in the final assault and capture of the city of Delhi'. The manner in which such inscriptions invoke British patriotism and sacrifice is strongly reminiscent of the language and the sentiments of a great deal of 'mutiny' literature that was woven around similar tales of 'selfless bravery' in the face of 'native atrocities' (Singh 1973).

There are a few tablets that refer to the familial associations of dead soldiers but, generally speaking, such information is absent from the army graves. How their surviving kin viewed this absence, as also the manner of burial at what became, for them, sites of remembrance, remains unknown. But at least at one location, a widow decided to commemorate her husband separately. He was C.A. Edwards who had been interred in the communal grave near Flagstaff Tower by his 'brother officers'. Apart from setting out the circumstances in which they had died, the army memorial stone remembered them as armymen who belonged to the 54th Regiment of the Bengal Native Infantry. Edwards' widow, though, wanted her husband to be remembered in other ways. On the epitaph which she had separately inscribed within the same enclosure, he is memorialized not merely as a soldier ('ever ready when Duty called him'), but as a son (the eldest of R.V. Edwards of Clifton, Bristol), and also as a man of 'Christian virtues' and, most poignantly, as an affectionate husband. As she put it, 'in the endearing

character of Husband, his fond care and affection with the memory of many sterling qualities will ever be sacredly Cherished by her who must ever Mourn his sad and untimely end . . . This Tomb is erected by his bereaved and sorrowing widow' (for the full inscription, see Irving 1910: 16).

Apart from the graves, what produced a coherent archaeological arena of remembrance was the perpetuation of the memory of incidents that were crucial, from the British perspective, in the trajectory of events that unfolded between May and September 1857. Such commemoration mainly, though not exclusively, attached itself to the sites where the events had unfolded. If we proceed chronologically, the most heroic act (for the British) of 11 May, when the revolt began in Delhi, was the deliberate blowing up of the Expense magazine, south of Kashmere Gate. Two gates of the magazine, which is practically all that remained of it, became a memorial monument and on them was inscribed the memory of the actions of the 'nine resolute Englishmen' who fired it. Five of them perished in the ensuing explosion, which, the tablet informs us, 'at the same time destroyed many of the enemy'. Then, there were the events of early June when the British regained the Ridge and returned to the Delhi cantonments after winning a crucial battle at Badli-ki-Sarai. The 3 metre high red sandstone column at Azadpur, in the vicinity of the battle site, commemorated that victory. Bearing the ornamental logo of the Gordon Highlanders, this was a memorial to the members of its 75th Regiment who were killed in that battle.

The most comprehensive memorialization, though, was with reference to the assault on the city in September 1857. For one thing, inscriptions were fixed on the half-dozen or so siege batteries that had been used in the attack and were located across the alignment of the Ridge, from Qudsia Gardens near the river where the Siege Mortar Battery stood, to the Sammy House Battery, south-east of Bara Hindu Rao. The legends—much like museum labels—identified, in each case, the commanding officers, the nature of armaments, and the specific action for which these were used, whether it was to 'silence' the Kashmir bastion or to 'breach' the

curtain of the Water bastion of the rebels. In the context of September 1857, even death in unsuccessful military action was commemorated. For instance, a memorial was set up near the grave of Captain Barnett, which marked the losses that the 1st Bengal Fusiliers suffered near this spot. The soldiers who had died formed part of the 4th Column that was vigorously rebuffed by the rebel army, although the epitaph remembers only their bravery, not the failed assault: 'Familiar with the aspect of Death which they had confronted in many battles from which they had always emerged victorious, they met this last inevitable call here with intrepid duty, falling on the 14th September 1857 in the faithful discharge of their duty' (Fanshawe 1902: 62).

In fact, as one surveys the 'mutiny' landscape, the proactive manner in which the army commemorated scenes of action becomes palpable, as does the absence of this in relation to those incidents in which people were killed in massacres and mob violence. There were, for instance, no state memorials for the 'civilians'—mainly women and children—who were killed in front of the Naqqar Khana in the Red Fort nor for the others who were put to death by the rebels in different parts of the city. Subsequently, it was at the initiative of the Baptist Mission that funds were collected to build a church in the memory of the English and Indian Christians who lost their lives on the outbreak of the revolt. Known as the St Stephen's Memorial Church, it was first opened for service on 11 May 1867, the tenth anniversary of the 1857 rebellion (*Gazetteer of the Delhi District* 1884: 63).

Apart from the creation of a new church, the memory of various 'civilian' victims was also immortalized in the church where many of them must have worshipped, St James' Church. Social remembrance at St James' Church took the form of memorial stones, set up by the families and friends of the dead. Simon Fraser, the murdered commissioner of Delhi, was memorialized here, by an unnamed 'old friend', as was T.W. Collins, deputy collector of Delhi, and members of his family, ranging from his wife and children to his mother-in-law and his brothers-in-law. The memorial tablet for this large kin group was set up by the 'surviving orphans of T.W. Collins'. A tablet was also erected in the memory

of Doctor Chaman Lal who had been killed on the first day of the revolt in Delhi. While the identity of those who set up a memorial for him remains unmentioned, the language of the inscription clearly suggests that it must have been a 'European' churchperson. Chaman Lal's name appears in its anglicized form—as Chimmun Lall—while he is described as a 'Native Christian' who converted from Hinduism in 1852 and 'fell a martyr to his faith on the day of the Massacre of Christians in Delhi'. At the same time, to ensure that 'natives' could also read the text, it was inscribed in both English and Urdu. Finally, inside the church was interred part of the tomb of the late William Fraser that had been desecrated by the rebels in May 1857. This is a beautiful stone slab, inlaid with green and yellow stones in the design of a tree. In memory of the friendship of Fraser and James Skinner, this was set in the chancel floor, west of Skinner's own grave and engraved with an inscription that sets forth the reasons as to why the slab had been re-enshrined inside the church.

A relevant aspect, worth emphasizing, is that the commemoration of particular incidents and events was not simultaneous but staggered, over fifty years or so. An instance in point is the blowing open of Kashmere Gate in September 1857, which was indispensable to the success of the British assault on Delhi, since it had allowed direct passage into the walled city (Fig. 4.5). About a dozen soldiers were either mortally wounded or were killed in clearing it. This, in fact, had drawn special mention, in November 1857, from Governor General Canning, who offered a tribute 'of admiration and thanks to the brave soldiers who, under Lieutenants Home and Salkeld, accomplished the desperate task' (Canning 1857b). But it was after almost two decades (in 1876) that a stone tablet came to be fixed between the arched openings of the gate. This was done by the Commander in Chief in India, General Lord Napier of Magdala. The tablet mentioned the details of the attack as also the names of the soldiers, English and Indian, who had spearheaded it.

Why this commemorative tablet was set up in 1876 is not clear. It may have been fixed when the Prince of Wales visited Delhi in January 1876, though it is likely that this was part of the

Fig. 4.5: Kashmere Gate in 1858

preparations for the Imperial Assemblage which was held in the city in 1877, to celebrate the assumption of the title of Empress of India by Queen Victoria. The Imperial Assemblage will be discussed in the next section, but what may be mentioned here is that Napier's tribute appears to be an incomplete citation. As Fanshawe (1902: 89) later pointed out, the names of the two 'native' men who had been specially mentioned in the army report for their 'determined bravery and coolness'—Havaldar Ram Taroy and Sepoy Sahib Singh—do not appear on it.

H.C. Fanshawe was the deputy commissioner of the area, one who was deeply interested in Delhi's history and monuments, and he chanced upon this error because he was writing a book on the city. In the course of his research, he also noted that the site of No. IV Siege Mortar Battery had been left uncommemorated. By bearings and offsets from the other batteries and sites marked on the plans of 1857, he determined that this must have stood about a hundred yards inside Qudsia Gardens. A miniature battery was set up there in 1900 and the message that he had inscribed on it faithfully imitated the cryptic inscriptions on the tablets of the other batteries. It read:

Left Attack—Lieut. W.A. GREATHED	[Directing Engineer, Bengal Engineers,
NO. IV BATTERY	Armament, 10 mortars

Captain & Brevet Major Tombs, Royal Artillery, Commanding
To shell Kashmir Gate & Kashmir & Water Bastions

The other memorial which was set up decades after the revolt, though not in the vicinity of the 'original theatre of action', was the Telegraph Memorial. On 11 May 1857, the message sent from the telegraph office in Delhi had forewarned other British stations about the unfolding revolt. This office was originally situated behind Flagstaff House on the Ridge, while the granite obelisk memorial was erected by members of the telegraph department in the walled city—in front of the new telegraph office. Set up on 19 April 1902, it was elaborately inscribed on the front and back. The front epigraph is fairly novel in the sense that it tells us about the staff composition of the office in 1857, remembers the 'loyal and devoted services' of the two young signallers who telegraphed information about what was happening in Delhi, and gives details about their subsequent careers. It also takes full credit for the British victory in 1857, ending with the words of Sir Robert Montgomery that 'the Electric Telegraph has saved India'! Although the British army would have disagreed with Montgomery's assessment, the biographical details certainly helped to correct the colourful mythology that had been created around this event, at least in one account. Apparently, Cooper's *Handbook for Delhi*, written in 1863 (cited in ibid.: 108), had mentioned that, on 11 May 1857, the signaller at Delhi was killed with his hand still upon the telegraph instrument, whereas, as the Telegraph Memorial tells us, neither of them died in such dramatic circumstances. While one of them, J.W. Pilkington, had died a decade after the revolt, in 1867, the other signaller, W. Brendish, had retired from service only in 1896.

But why was the memorial set up only in 1902? As in the case of the Kashmere Gate tablet, we shall, perhaps, never know, although one suspects that it may have to do with the enthusiasm of Fanshawe, who believed that the British government in India had

done too little to hallow the memories of its dead servants who 'fell before Delhi, upholding the cause of their country' (ibid.: 80). After all, it was Fanshawe who had recommended that a memorial cross be set up in the Military Cemetery where many mutiny veterans, including Henry Barnard, were buried.

Finally, a word about the official Mutiny Memorial of Delhi that was erected in 1863. Constructed on the site of the artillery unit known as Taylor's Battery, which bore the brunt of rebel fire, there is much about the character of this tapering red sandstone monument that can be discussed (Fig. 4.6). There is, for instance, its indifferent Gothic design, which resembles 'a telescope badly drawn out' (ibid.: 85). The arched marble-backed recesses, inset on all sides of the octagonal tower, are also poorly executed, occasionally created out of three separate pieces of stone. What is most striking, though, is that these recesses are prolifically inscribed and appear to comprehensively set out the narrative of the Delhi revolt. There is a detailed list of regiments that were present, actions that were fought at or near Delhi by the Delhi Field Force, a chronology about the siege ranging from the arming of batteries to the capture of the palace, and a carefully compiled 'return of casualties' suffered by the army. There are separate columns that record the number of soldiers killed, wounded, and missing and also the corps to which they belonged.

However, as we examine the memorial narrative more carefully, it becomes evident that historical details are selectively inscribed. There is no mention at all of British army actions in Delhi on 11 May, or in the days that followed, perhaps because they failed to suppress the revolt. Nor are the British soldiers who died in those early days thought worthy of commemoration. In a sense, its Hindustani name, Fatehgarh (Victory Fort) is an appropriate one because its narrative of commemoration concerns itself exclusively with British successes against rebel forces (Hasan 1916, II: 282). What also stand out in the Mutiny Memorial's encapsulated history are military and race distinctions. Army hierarchy is reflected in the manner in which the casualties are presented, in three categories—officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers.

Fig. 4.6: Mutiny Memorial on the northern Ridge

Racial difference is inscribed into each of these categories; the casualties are subdivided into 'European' and 'Native'. Generally speaking, on memorial monuments, the names of soldiers who died are listed, but in this case, of the 1029 armymen who perished, only forty-seven are specifically mentioned. Even in death, Englishmen were privileged over their racial 'others'. The inscribed names are 'European', mainly those of dead officers. The fourteen 'native' officers who perished remain anonymous, reduced to a mere statistical detail in the monument's inventory of casualties.

The Afterlife of 1857 in Delhi

The British consolidation of their victory over the Delhi rebels in 1857 had a very specific material impact on the city, as did the various memorials that sprang up across its terrain. In the decades that followed, this memorialized landscape continued to be confirmed and elaborated by the victors, as has been touched upon in the previous section. But, simultaneously, there were also policy shifts that materially changed and occasionally inverted aspects of the revolt's brutal aftermath.

This simultaneous confirmation and inversion clearly stands out in the setting of the Imperial Assemblage that was held twenty years after the revolt, in 1877. With the end of the Company's rule, the British Crown had become the centre of authority and, as conditions in India stabilized, this relationship was further cemented by the addition of a new title by Queen Victoria in 1876—that of the Empress of India. Some months later, a grand gathering of the British rulers, Indian princes, nobles, 'native' gentlemen, etc., was organized to celebrate this addition. Even though Calcutta was the nerve centre of British India, it was decided by the planners that this assemblage should be held in Delhi because the city represented the erstwhile Mughal capital. By placing the Queen's authority upon the old throne of the Mughals, it was hoped that the supreme power that she enjoyed over her Indian subjects would be symbolically reiterated within the parameters of Indian tradition (Cohn 1987: 656; also see Trevithick 1990).

Within Delhi, a city of tents and pavilions for the accommodation of the various attending dignitaries was set up, and, significantly, as the official history of the Imperial Assemblage tells us (Wheeler 1887: 47):

> the English camps mostly stood on the memorable site which was occupied by the British army in 1857. On one side was the Ridge where British cannon was planted against the doomed city. On the other side was the Nujufgarh Canal, which formed the rear of the besieging force. It was difficult to gaze upon the different camps without recalling some of the scenes in that famous siege.

The procession which brought the viceroy and various guests from the railway station to the camp also followed a route that circumambulated the terrain of the revolt. It lasted for three hours and proceeded from the station to Jama Masjid, turned around the mosque and entered Chandni Chowk. It then went through the Lahore Gate, moving on to Sabzi Mandi, 'the scene of many hard fought battles during the great siege', and, finally, went up the Ridge 'so gallantly held by British troops during the height of the troubles in 1857' (ibid.: 56).

There is little doubt that Lord Lytton's assemblage unambiguously refreshed, for the participants and observers, the memory of the revolt in Delhi and the bravery and 'sacrifice' that were involved in its suppression. At the same time, encoded in its enactment were many other messages that worked against the grain of the 1857 victory. For one thing, the assemblage was part of a policy to develop better ties between Indians, especially the 'native' aristocracy of the country, and the Crown. On the landscape where they had faced each other as foes, they were now meeting as 'friends', we are told, as shots and shells were replaced by feasting and cordiality. The occasion was also used to make a specific announcement aimed to 'undo' the damage that had been inflicted on Muslim sentiment in Delhi in 1857. This concerned the reopening of the Zinat-ul-Masajid and the Fatehpuri Masjid for public worship. In the latter case, more than Rs 100,000 was paid as compensation to Umrao Singh, the son of Chunna Mal, so as to enable the transfer of the shops and quadrangle to Muslims (Deputy Commissioner 1877).

This did not mean that the mosques reverted to their pre-1857 status. In fact, as in the case of Jama Masjid (which was reopened for worship in November 1862), certain conditions were laid down under which they were to be transferred, which included making proper arrangements for them being kept in repair. Evidently, British officials saw no contradiction in making the repair of the mosques a precondition for their reopening even while, a few hundred yards from them, the British army drastically changed the character of equally historic buildings inside the Red Fort. The government also reserved the right to resume possession if the

managers of the mosques failed to act upon the stipulated conditions. Thus, while the measures were packaged as 'concessions' which were aimed at mitigating the 1857 confiscation of the mosques, the reified form in which they were handed over made it amply clear to Delhi's residents that the British Raj was the centre of all authority pertaining to them.

Twenty-five years later, a second Imperial Assemblage was organized—a Coronation Darbar to celebrate the coronation of King Edward VII as the Emperor of India. Held in Delhi (in January 1903) by the viceroy, Lord Curzon, this too saw a similar commemoration, in terrain and through rituals that consciously evoked the revolt. An amphitheatre was constructed around the site of Lord Lytton's Darbar which had stood on the land from where the British had fought the rebels in 1857. The route of the viceregal procession, as earlier, traversed much of the 'mutiny' landscape. The 'sufferings and triumphs of nearly half a century ago' (Wheeler 1905: 111) were further invoked by the inclusion and assignment of a prominent place in the Darbar to mutiny survivors of the British army who had fought at Delhi and Lucknow. Of the veterans present, 387 were Indians while twenty-seven were Europeans and Eurasians, and they had been invited so as to give them 'an opportunity to revisit the scene of their former deeds of daring, and to take part in the great solemnity which but for their valour might never have been held' (ibid.: 111).

At the same time, this occasion, like the first Imperial Assemblage, reconstituted the 1857 legacy in important ways. For one it resulted in 'undoing' some of the destruction wreaked by the British forces on historic structures within the walled city. In the Red Fort, structural restorations by the Archaeological Survey of India were undertaken with Darbar funds. This included repairing the inlay work on the low platform in the Diwan-i-Am, the replacement of the iron grating around it and also of the wooden balustrades between the Diwan-i-Khas and the Musamman Burj. Apart from the occasion itself, it is relevant to remember the general context in which such restorations were undertaken. Lord Curzon's agenda regarding monuments was certainly related to his deep interest in archaeology but, equally, it was animated by the need to make

imperial governance appear more enlightened. Historic buildings that had been pillaged or converted into dingy government spaces in 1857, such as those at Delhi, were an embarrassing reminder of 'a century of British vandalism and crime' (as Curzon put it), while dismantling signs of such colonial violence was necessary to lend credence to the construction of a beneficent imperial identity (Lahiri 2000). The programme of architectural conservation and restoration around the Red Fort which coincided with the preparations for the Darbar has to be understood from this perspective. Such measures were urgently required because two notable gatherings connected with it were to be held in the Red Fort, one of which was the state ball, the venue of which was to be the Diwan-i-Khas.

It is, however, the second gathering—the 'Grand chapter of the two Indian Orders'—which amplifies the circumstances which were instrumental in effacing the violence of the revolt. This investiture ceremony was to be held in the Diwan-i-Am, with the dais placed before the throne platform. This, of course, drew attention to the large gaps in the wall behind the platform, which had been created by the looting of its *pietra dura* panels by Captain Jones in 1857. The Viceroy's Council, therefore, immediately requested the return of the panels so that 'the background of the throne should represent to assembled spectators, by a careful restoration, to its original condition, not the vandalism of an earlier generation, but the generous enlightenment of a later and more cultured age' (Curzon and Council 1902). Although the panels reached India before the Darbar, they could not be put in place in time for the investiture ceremony. But, shortly afterwards, they were restored and today they form the backdrop to Shah Jahan's throne.

Many other objects that had been removed from the Red Fort in 1857 also had interesting afterlives, not entirely unrelated to questions of remembrance. The trajectory of one, Bahadur Shah Zafar's 'Holy Shirt', is especially interesting. The shirt in question, with verses of the Koran written on it, was apparently one of four similar shirts which had been sent from Mecca to four Muslim powers and was said to provide a kind of immunity against trouble to the wearer. We are told that 'the old king had worn it day

and night for the last few days, previous to his flight, in order to avert the coming evil' (Thompson 1909). For some unaccountable reason, he threw it off at the last moment, and it was found by the French nurse of the children of Colonel Tytler near the gate by which the royal party had fled. It then passed into the possession of the Tytler family. The Tytlers kept the shirt in a bank vault but, until this became known, they were the victims of several robberies and more than one serious attempt on their lives. Clearly, the value of the shirt had everything to do with the properties it was supposed to be imbued with: on the one hand, its association with Mecca, on the other hand, its association with the last Mughal emperor who had become the symbol of Indian resistance against the British.

We next hear of the shirt during the Coronation Darbar in 1903 when the Nizam of Hyderabad made an offer of Rs 10,000 for it. A little after that offer was made, the imam of the Jama Masjid of Delhi wanted Mrs Tytler to allow him to exhibit it in the ground in front of the mosque. He expected that thousands of pilgrims would flock to see it and that the proceeds of the entrance fees could be divided between the masjid and Mrs Tytler. The exhibition was on the verge of taking place but was vetoed at the last moment by the commissioner of Delhi, Major Douglas. As he put it, he 'could not possibly run the risk of a riot'. According to Edith Livingston-Thompson, the daughter of the late Tytlers, this 'interference was providential, for knowing the numerous attempts that had already been made to get the shirt back, I feel confident that this was but one more and one that in all probability would have succeeded' (ibid.). Eventually, she sold it for a sum of Rs 12,000 to the Archaeological Survey in 1909. It then became part of the collection of Mughal objects in the archaeological museum of the Red Fort where it is still displayed. So, while the revolt resulted in the banishment of Bahadur Shah Zafar from Delhi, at least the shirt that he lost once again resides in the fort where he spent most of his life, ironically re-enshrined by the political successors of the very people who had looted his palace.

Finally, let us move on to post-Independence Delhi, since it is only after 1947 that Delhi's residents and the Indian ruling class have remembered and commemorated the revolt in a palpably

material way. Before doing that, it is necessary to point out that though Delhi remained the political capital of India (the imperial capital of the British had been shifted from Calcutta to Delhi in 1912), independence and the partition of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan changed its basic character in a number of ways. For one, there was a massive transfer of population—nearly 500,000 refugees arrived in the city while as many as 330,000 Muslims left Delhi (many of them must have had ancestors who had fought against the British in 1857).

From the perspective of the present essay, it is significant how several old inhabitants of Delhi, now free citizens of an independent nation-state, almost immediately articulated demands that were based on the social memory of the revolt. A few months after India attained independence, several Delhi villages petitioned the government to overturn the retribution that they had suffered during the revolt. Such demands, incidentally, were articulated not merely in local meetings but also in the Constituent Assembly of India (Deputy Commissioner 1948). The first section of this essay had drawn attention to the manner in which the rural landscape and social geography of the Delhi region had been deliberately changed through the British policy of land confiscation. The successors of several of the families that had lost their lands in such circumstances now requested their return. Such demands were made by the villages of Chowkri Mubarakbad, Wazirpur, Khampur, and Chandrawal (ibid.).

There is no ambiguity that it is the material milieu of the post-1857 scenario, where Delhi's rebels were penalized by the British for revolting against them, whose change was sought. An extract from a letter written by the general secretary of the Congress Committee of Wazirpur to the chief commissioner of Delhi makes this connection (ibid.). It asked the Indian government to return the lands that

> were taken away from us by the British Government during the *Jang-i-Azadi* (war of independence) ie., in 1857 be restored to us and given back to us as early as possible by the National Government. It may be mentioned here, Sir, that now when our Mother-land (India) has

> achieved her freedom, the losses which we had undergone during the British Raj and were deprived of many things only because we had participated in the struggle for freedom which resulted in a Revolution of 1857, be made good to us.

The British, as the victors of 1857, had confiscated their lands and now families were demanding that the Indian government should remember their sacrifice by returning their patrimony to them. Eventually, no transfers took place because the lands were legally in the possession of other proprietors. Still, this reminds us that multiple perspectives cohere around the landscape that is created through the crucible of war. What were sites of victory for the British came to be remembered by those who had lived there as the material signifiers of their colonized status, a situation which they tried to change as soon as they attained independence.

If the rural landscape that had been redrawn in 1857 remained unchanged, the same cannot be said about other segments of the memorialized landscape. Take the case of the British graveyards, which suffered damage on many occasions. The Nicholson/Kashmere Gate Cemetery is an example of this. During the 1947 disturbances, apparently the cemetery and the graves there were badly damaged by refugees who were encamped in that area (High Commissioner 1963). Subsequently, extensive repairs were carried out by the office of the chief commissioner of Delhi. Some years later, in March 1956, this cemetery was deliberately vandalized by a milk seller called Bhooran/Bhawaran Singh from the nearby Qudsia Gardens who damaged, broke, and upturned nearly two hundered graves. He was sentenced that very month to over nine months of rigorous imprisonment 'for trespassing into a graveyard with the intention of hurting the feelings of the Christian community by breaking tombstones' (Staff Reporter 1956). In spite of such episodes, on the whole the nineteenth-century form of the Nicholson Cemetery is still recognizable.

This cannot be said for many other sites. For instance, the Rajpura Military Cemetery, where Henry Barnard and many other soldiers were buried, no longer exists. This originally stood in the pre-1857 British cantonments, which, from 1933 onwards, came

to house the University of Delhi. The cemetery continued to exist until about 1980, when, according to residents of that area, it began to witness a massive, irregular influx. This soon took a residential form and is now known as the Christian Colony. There is still a cemetery adjacent to the colony, but the graves there are all of post-1970 vintage. There is no trace at all of the nineteenth-century 'Gora Kabristan' (burial ground of white people), since all its old graves have been built over. The only material indicator of the original cemetery that remains is a memorial stone, set in its old gateway, inscribed with the following message: 'Within this cemetery are interred the remains of most of the British officers and men who lost their lives during the Siege of Delhi in 1857.'

If the Rajpura Military Cemetery has been destroyed by an illegal influx of local people, other sites, especially individual graves which are no longer traceable on the ground, have possibly disappeared as a consequence of a deliberate policy of the UK government formulated in the aftermath of 1947. In an announcement to both Houses of Parliament on 15 March 1949, the British government clearly stated that a full-scale maintenance of all the cemeteries in India and Pakistan would be a formidable and impossible commitment for them (Bullock 1951). Apparently, £45,000 used to be spent annually on the maintenance of cemeteries through the Indian Ecclesiastical Establishment. The Establishment was replaced by the British Monuments and Graves Section of the British High Commissioner's Office, and it became evident that substantial reductions in cemetery expenditure would have to be made. Importantly, as the parliamentary announcement stated, while London would try to maintain several of them, especially the more important of the historical cemeteries, through a limited financial commitment, 'where they could not be maintained . . . they should revert to nature in a dignified and decent manner' (ibid.). It is therefore likely that fiscal logic was the primary cause for the 'abandonment' of several 'minor' British graves and monuments in Delhi.

Along with this, the difficulties involved in preserving such monuments in the changed political circumstances must also have been a factor and, at least in one case, resulted in the deliberate

destruction of an important memorial monument. Although the memorial is not in Delhi, a summary of this event is worth citing since it reveals the larger policy considerations that form the backdrop to post-Independence British alterations of the landscape of the revolt. The monument in question is the Memorial Well at Kanpur in North India. Like many of the Delhi 'mutiny' monuments, this commemorated a local 1857 event, which involved the throwing into the well of bodies of Europeans apparently murdered on the instructions of the rebel leader Nana Sahib. A memorial had been erected by the imperial government in 1863 consisting of a marble angel on the wellhead, while the well, set in the centre of a garden, came to be surrounded by an elaborate Gothic stone arch. An inscription set out the details of this event and there were various tombs of those killed in the mutiny as well. Before 1947, although Indians were admitted to the gardens on payment of an entrance fee, admission to the well itself and to the tombs was restricted to 'Europeans'. However, on the day India became independent (15 August 1947), a large mob invaded this complex, blackened the face of the angel, broke its hands, and desecrated some of the graves.

Although the United Provinces government immediately apologized for the desecration and carried out repairs, the future of Kanpur's Memorial Well became the subject of anxious and urgent consideration for the UK High Commission. After a great deal of discussion with the local Christian organizations of that area, the High Commission decided that the angel, along with the screen and the tombstones, would be moved to the churchyard of All Souls Memorial Church in Kanpur. But, in order to ensure that the old site of the memorial was not desecrated again, it was decided that the entire area would be levelled so as to leave no trace of its former significance. As Brigadier Bullock, who was in charge of the British Monuments and Graves Section of the High Commission, put it, the 'losing of the identity' of the actual site was to be done so thoroughly that no future visitor would be able to say where the well was. Bullock also wanted steps to be taken to ensure that, after this was done, the actual site of the well was never built

over since 'it is hallowed ground to all British and indeed Christian people, and even the slightest possibility of a secular building—not to say a Hindu temple or a Mosque—being erected over it is abhorrent' (ibid.).

The changes that have taken place in India's 'mutiny' landscape after 1947 seem to be the result of various factors, ranging from local acts of vandalism to British policy decisions. Alterations have also resulted because of the curious manner in which the Indian government has chosen to memorialize the revolt. In Delhi, this has been done by appropriating British memorials, through the setting up of inscribed stones at some of them. The purpose of these inscriptions is to counter the narratives of the original epitaphs. Take the case of the Mutiny Memorial on the northern Ridge. Twenty-five years after India became independent, on 15 August 1972, this was 'converted' into a memorial, as the inscription at the entrance of the monument informs us, 'for those martyrs who rose and fought against the British during 1857 AD'. The conversion is confined to two inscriptions, one of which is mentioned above, while the other inscription (Fig. 4.7) points out that 'The "enemy"

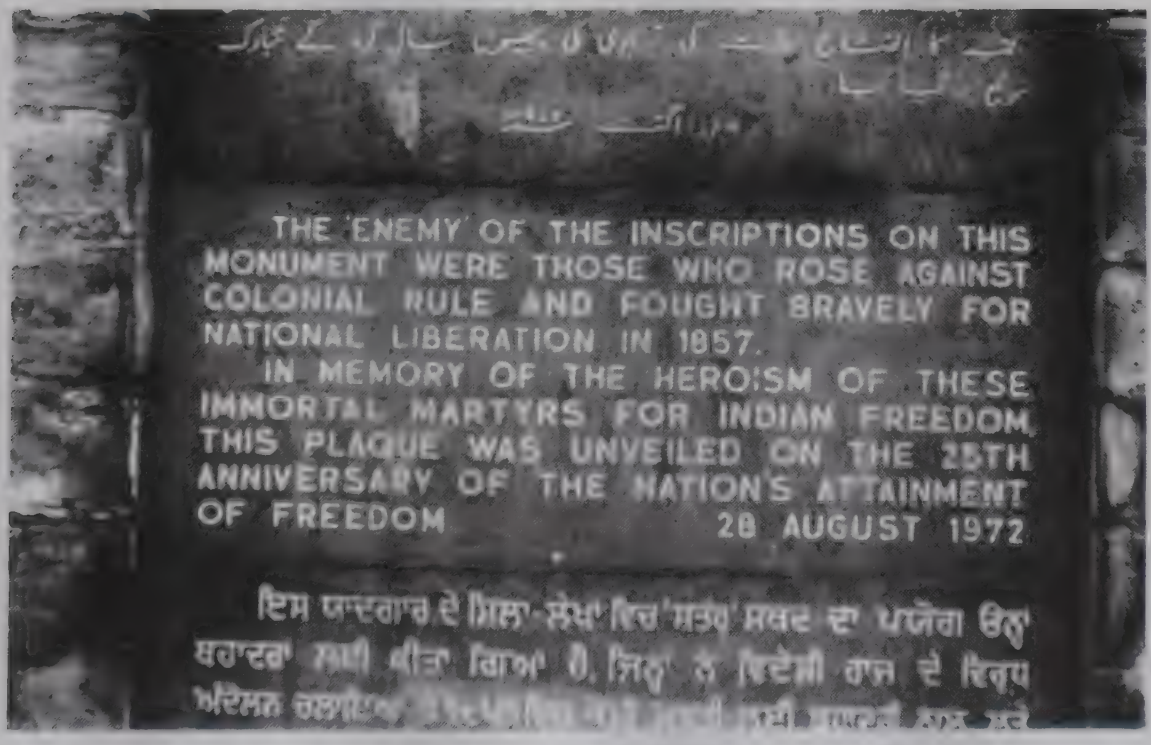
THE ENEMY OF THE INSCRIPTIONS ON THIS MONUMENT WERE THOSE WHO ROSE AGAINST COLONIAL RULE AND FOUGHT BRAVELY FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION IN 1857.
IN MEMORY OF THE HEROISM OF THESE IMMORTAL MARTYRS FOR INDIAN FREEDOM THIS PLAQUE WAS UNVEILED ON THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATION'S ATTAINMENT OF FREEDOM
28 AUGUST 1972

Fig. 4.7: Plaque installed in 1972 by the Government of India on the Mutiny Memorial

of the inscriptions on this monument were those who rose against colonial rule'. These messages appear to be incongruous, minimalist gestures, aimed only at challenging the British perspective. There is no separate memorial to honour the rebels, no mention at all of those who lost their lives fighting the British, nor any attempt to highlight how the revolt tied up with the history of the Delhi region.

There must be many reasons why this massive rebellion has remained forgotten in archaeological terms, ranging from the changed social composition of Delhi to the absence of a sense of history among the ruling class that inhabits India's political capital. But perhaps the most important reason has been the manner in which the national has subsumed the local here, tellingly summed up by Gupta: 'Partly because Delhi has the misfortune to be the national capital, the national is crushing the city; Tilak Nagars and Nehru Roads proliferate, and hardly anyone knows of the poetry of Mir and Zauq, the humour of Ghalib, the quality of life that Chandni Chowk once symbolized' (1981: ix).

That the rich history of Delhi's revolt has been rendered invisible through the process of 'nationalizing' becomes evident from a site of commemoration that recently was more established—the museum of India's Freedom Struggle. Inaugurated in September 1995, the Swatantrata Sangram Sangrahalaya is dedicated to 'the memory of the heroic men and women, peasants and workers, students and professionals who participated in the attainment of Swaraj (self-rule)' (Rao 1995). The museum is situated in the Red Fort, a fitting locale since this is where the 1857 revolt broke out in Delhi, and it has devoted one section to the revolt, presenting it as the first war of Indian independence.

Because the focus is 'national' rather than 'local', the details of the happenings in Delhi are interwoven with those of Awadh, Calcutta, Jhansi, and Bihar. But, state remembrance, as the museum display reveals, remains confined to the leaders of the revolt in Delhi, personages like Bahadur Shah II and Bakht Khan, his military commander. The social memory of the others who lost their lives in the city is not accorded a place in this gallery—Sayyad

Mohammad Ahir, the calligraphist; Bahadur Singh, a resident of Gurgaon; Ganga Prasad Kayastha, who lived in Chandni Chowk; Azimullah Khan, another Delhi resident and editor of *Paigham-e-Azad* (Message of Freedom) are just a handful from a list which includes thousands of names of those who were hanged by the British on charges of treason and sedition (Chopra 1974). Their role has not been thought worthy of remembrance.

In conclusion, then, the form in which the commemoration of 1857 has come to be materially constituted has much to do with the selection and construction of a particular kind of past. In Delhi's 'national' culture, very little space has been created for a historic moment in its 'local' history. At the same time, with shifts in the social basis of political power, remembrance can assume new material forms. In another theatre of the 1857 revolt, the city of Meerut where the sepoy mutiny first broke out, the 'local' has now made its presence felt. Recently, the names of eighty-five sepoys who spearheaded the army rebellion there have been put up in the Shahid (Martyrs') Park, while a statue of an 1857 rebel called Dhani Singh Kotwal waits to be installed. The manner in which the changed political sociology of the region has contributed to the creation of such memorials is worth exploring, but is beyond the ambit of this essay. What it does force us to recognize, though, is that the social commemoration of 1857 continues to be inscribed in new ways. In the future, it is entirely possible that the rebels of Delhi—their voices and acts—will be remembered in a material form which will raise them above their present marginalized and faceless status.

Acknowledgements

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though it was officially closed for renovation work; Rajbir Singh and R.N. Kaw of the Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, who have helped out with the photographs. Figs 4.2, 4.4, and 4.5 appear to be photographs that were taken by Felice Beato in 1858. But since I have used the set that is with the Archaeological Survey of India, my citations refer to the relevant albums in its photographic library.

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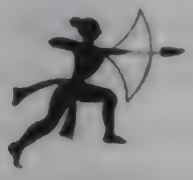
5

Partitioning the Past



THE GENESIS OF THIS ESSAY CAN BE LOCATED IN THE outstanding Harappan gallery of the National Museum in New Delhi. Many times, I have stopped and wondered about the artefacts and antiquities from Mohenjodaro and Harappa displayed there. If India—as we have been told—had lost her Indus heritage because most sites of the Indus civilization in 1947 fell within the national boundaries of Pakistan, how has it retained such a superb collection of antiquities from those 'lost' cities?

It was in search of an explanation to this that I decided to look into the treasure trove of files in the head office of the Archaeological Survey of India. I did find an answer in those files, since the Survey was centrally involved in negotiations through which undivided India's past was partitioned. But I also came upon unknown events relating to monuments—attacks on some of them, their forced occupation, as also the pressures on the Archaeological Survey as it struggled to maintain the integrity of monuments that were converted into relief camps and much more. It then became evident

A version of this paper with the title 'Partitioning the Past: India's Archaeological Heritage after Independence' will appear in G.F. Scarre and R.A.E. Coningham (eds), *The Ethics of Archaeology II* (to be published by Cambridge University Press).

that the literature that 1947 and its aftermath has spawned had not examined these events and the challenges that they posed.

The year 1947 saw a redrawing of the political map as a consequence of which a united India came to be partitioned into the two nation-states of India and Pakistan. This was accompanied by an unprecedented bloodbath resulting in more than a million dead, and a two-way mass migration involving several million people. Where and how refugee populations were rehabilitated, the mechanism that was adopted for land compensation, the partitioning of resources and departments, the emotional trauma because of displacement and death in the aftermath of August 1947—these are issues that have been discussed by many historians. What have not been considered are the pressures and problems that India's archaeological past had to face on account of the demographic deluge on the one hand, and the division of assets on the other.

This is somewhat surprising since an extraordinary irony must have stared everyone in the face. As the two nations came to be divided along religious lines, India became the inheritor of a rich Islamic heritage. The new boundaries had partitioned the archaeological map in such a way that, as Mortimer Wheeler, India's director general of archaeology in 1947, put it, Pakistan was 'found to include almost the whole of the known extent of the earliest civilisation of India, that of the Indus valley'. Simultaneously, 'almost all the Mohammadan monuments of the first importance' remained in India (Wheeler 1947–8: 1).

How did the massive communal carnage accompanying the birthing of India and Pakistan impact this heritage? How did the Archaeological Survey of India deal with this and other problems that were posed by the Partition turbulence and trauma? This essay looks at some of these challenges as it describes the impact of Independence and Partition on monuments, on museum collections, and on the nature of archaeological research itself. It is, at the outset, necessary to state that it has been written primarily from the Indian perspective and, in the absence of data from Pakistan and Bangladesh (or East Pakistan as it was called after 1947), has no claims to being a comprehensive exploration. The ethical problems, though, that are highlighted here could not have been unique

to India, even if their resolution may have been somewhat different depending upon the local and national situations in that exceptionally difficult time of religious polarization and violence.

The Fate of Islamic Monuments

Islamic monuments in several parts of India were under siege in 1947, with the Archaeological Survey having to combat extraordinary pressures on them from various quarters. These came from looters, from refugee camps, as also from the callous acts of omission and commission of various government departments.

Delhi is an example of this. It was India's political capital with a range of impressive Indo-Islamic monuments widely distributed across the city. Several of these began to be systematically attacked from September 1947 onwards. The reasons are not far to seek since it was in September that Delhi became the site of a particularly vicious campaign in which Muslims were butchered by the thousands. Many others would eventually move to camps for safety even as refugees, Hindu and Sikh, from other areas, especially Punjab, poured into the city (Pandey 1997: 2263). It was as a consequence of a larger anti-Muslim frenzy that descended upon the city that symbols of Muslim culture such as monuments and mosques were attacked.

How many places of worship were attacked is not known from the files of the Survey since they mainly record the desecration of what are protected monuments ie, those declared through legislation to be of national importance. From other sources it appears that more than a hundred mosques were damaged, and Mahatma Gandhi actually mentioned a figure of 137 in one of his prayer speeches in Delhi in the latter part of 1947. Gandhi had come to Delhi in September, and in a determined bid to halt the violence had visited Muslim neighbourhoods and places of worship (see Gandhi 1948). He also spoke at length about these attacks in his prayer speeches which were broadcast on All India Radio.

But what becomes palpable from the Survey files is the scale of damage (for details, see File 16C/1/47). For instance, in September, the Moti Masjid in Mehrauli had its marble minars torn off and

smashed—marble chips and shaft pieces were found littered all over the place when it was inspected shortly after the attack. At Wazirabad, the grave of the well-known saint Shahi Alam was completely 'wiped out', the *mimbar* (the traditional pulpit used by the imam of a mosque) was pulled down (Figs 5.1 and 5.2). Also, the beautiful red sandstone jalis were found all broken to pieces and many inscribed plaster medallions scraped off from wall facings. Sultan Ghari's tomb in south Delhi was also systematically pillaged, numerous graves outside the walled enclosure were dismantled, while four tombs in the crypt were demolished. Before the authorities stepped in and issued prohibitory orders, the demolishers had even planned to convert Sultan Ghari's crypt into a temple by installing a Hindu deity there. That was the intention at Chauburji mosque on the Delhi Ridge as well. A cement effigy of Hanuman, the revered monkey god of India, actually came to be set up there, and it could only eventually be removed with police help.

There are many other instances of this kind which are mentioned in Mahatma Gandhi's speeches and in Prime Minister Nehru's

Fig. 5.1: Shahi Alam's grave before Partition

Fig. 5.2: Shahi Alam's grave as it appears today

correspondence and in his speeches. In one of his letters to Sardar Patel (dated 22 October 1947) Nehru repeatedly mentioned that the government was specially responsible for the protection of places of worship and also suggested certain measures (Nehru 1986: 173–4). First, he advised that no one should be allowed to occupy a mosque. Second, the government must undertake to rebuild destroyed mosques. Third, he thought that a punitive fine should be imposed on the mohalla or neighbourhood. In fact, it was because there was political and administrative will at the top that attempts to convert mosques into temples in Delhi by placing images there were unsuccessful. My sense, though, is that those who brought in a Ram image into the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in December 1949 got their cue from what had happened in Delhi. The Ayodhya dispute itself has a history going back to the nineteenth century, but the particular manner of taking over the mosque—by installing images—could not have been unrelated to what had happened post-1947, events which were also widely publicized. Thus, the forcible occupation of mosques after Partition had an impact well beyond 1947. The difference was that in the case of Ayodhya,

administrative and political will was lacking at the district and state levels, and thus, the 1949 trespassers were not evicted from the Babri Masjid with all the tragic consequences that have followed from that lack of will.

If in Delhi looters targeted mosques and tombs, in some states it was the administration which oversaw more organized campaigns of destruction. This was true, for instance, of the princely states of Alwar and Bharatpur in Rajasthan. Princely India then was constituted of hundreds of small states and chiefdoms that were ruled by the local royalty. These would soon be amalgamated into the Union of India and the state of Pakistan. But at that time the administrative writ of the Indian government and its archaeological arm, the Archaeological Survey, was relatively tenuous in relation to other parts of India.

Consequently, unlike Delhi, where incidents in which monuments were targeted immediately came to the notice of the government, in states like Alwar and Bharatpur the situation was different. The Indian government only managed to confirm reports of destruction by sending inconspicuous agents to make secret enquiries. One of these was Shankar Das, a superintending archaeologist in the Archaeological Survey, whose enquiries revealed systematic monument demolition. Apparently, the profits to be made by grabbing the land on which these stood was the primary motive for demolition. Das's (1947) confidential report, extracted below, underlines the mechanism adopted in Alwar:

> I visited Alwar on the 10th December 1947, and studied the demolition of the mosques, graveyards and tombs in and around the city. This demolition campaign was launched by the state during the last disturbances and is still going on at some places. The State Ministers after a conference entrusted the task of demolition to one Sardar Joginder Singh, S.D.O. of the Public Works Department. This S.D.O. summoned various contractors and distributed the mosques and tombs for demolition amongst them on the simple conditions that whatever building material was got out of the debris would be appropriated by the contractor and virgin soil over which such a structure stood would be forfeited to the State. The contractors lost no time in razing both

> old and new mosques as well as grave yards to the ground and the building material thus torn out was removed from the sites and stacked at appreciable distances in quite an unseeming [*sic*] manner.

As a consequence of this, several mosques, graveyards, and tombs were either damaged or demolished. The singular Gumbad Fateh Jang's brackets and balcony *chajjas* (projecting eaves) were pulled down and the mosque situated in its northern enclosure was dismantled (Fig. 5.3). That it happened to survive at all was because refugees came to its rescue. Apparently, the premises were occupied by refugees from Pakistan who persuaded the contractor that they be allowed to stay there till they got suitable living accommodation elsewhere. As in the case of Alwar, in the princely state of Bharatpur as well, Das' visit revealed a similar story. Mosques and tombs were broken under the orders of the state with specific contracts being given for demolition.

Ironically, even as some Islamic monuments came under attack, others provided refugees with much-needed shelter. Gyanendra

Fig. 5.3: Mosque in the premises of the Gumbad Fateh Jang at Alwar. This was demolished after Partition

Pandey (1997: 2263) describes this graphically when he says that Delhi was literally transformed into a 'refugeeistan'. Initially, it was Muslims seeking a safe haven who occupied such places as

> . . . the Jama Masjid area itself, Nizamuddin and Okhla, other graveyards and abandoned Muslim monuments, the houses of cabinet ministers Abul Kalam Azad and Rafi Ahmed Qidwai and any other Muslim notable whose dwelling appeared comparatively secure, the Pakistani High Commission, and when these overflowed or (as in the case of the Jama Masjid locality) themselves became insecure, the huge refugee camps that were set up in the Purana Qila and Humayun's tomb.

Later, tens of thousands of Hindu and Sikh refugees took shelter in such camps, which continued to exist for several years after Partition. The difficulties of dealing with refugees from Pakistan have been described in the memoir of Dharma Vira (1975: 44–5) who handled the Refugee Section in Prime Minister Nehru's office. 'It all seems unimaginable now,' he tells us, 'but we who have been through these times cannot forget the amount of suffering these refugees had gone through—their distress and privations. Somebody's daughter snatched away; another person's wife dishonoured; their property gone; most of them living an uprooted life; and not knowing what was going to happen the next day. It was not easy to deal with these people. Nevertheless, the job had to be done. They had to be looked after and rehabilitated.'

Exceptional times evidently required exceptional measures. This is perhaps why the Archaeological Survey chose to ignore, for humanitarian reasons, what was stipulated in the act, where the monuments that were protected could not be occupied. Instead, it agreed to a more ethical option: permitting some of the monuments to be used as temporary refugee camps. Certain conditions were laid down by the Survey which allowed tents to be pitched within the compounds of monuments for housing refugees and only such minor alterations were to be made that could be removed without in any way damaging the character of the monuments. These conditions, however, could rarely be enforced by the Survey officials (Figs. 5.4 and 5.5).

Fig. 5.4: Refugees at Humayun's tomb

Fig. 5.5: Another view of refugees at Humayun's tomb

An instance which vividly demonstrates how the Archaeological Survey's views on matters relating to monuments were brushed aside is the case of Sher Shah's mosque in Purana Qila in Delhi. In April 1948, the Women's Section of the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation wrote to the rehabilitation commissioner about the need to accommodate a primary school in the mosque for the children of refugees living in Purana Qila (Director 1948). There were roughly 7000 people living there, and a regular primary school was being planned. This was for the 500 children who were being taught by the refugees themselves in open air classes—a situation which, with the summer of 1948 approaching, could not be sustained.

When this letter was forwarded to Mortimer Wheeler, he made it clear that while all other parts of the historic fort could be used, the unique character of the mosque made it impossible to hand it over for a primary school. As he noted (Wheeler 1948):

> Please understand that my Department has been only too happy to collaborate to the fullest possible extent in the appalling refugee problem which has confronted the Delhi authorities during the past six months. Certain of the Delhi monuments—buildings of outstanding fame in the architecture of Asia—have been used freely by the refugees in question, and in the Purana Qila no sort of difficulty has been placed in the way even of the erection of new structures for this purpose. I fear, however, that it is quite impossible for my Department to authorise the use of the Sher Shah Mosque as indicated. This mosque is an architectural gem of the highest value, and occupies a particularly high place in the history of Indo-Muslim culture. Whilst all other buildings in the Purana Qila have, as I say, been freely turned over to the refugees, it is essential to maintain the integrity of this mosque.

Wheeler's plea to maintain the integrity of the mosque appears to have fallen on deaf ears. The mosque was occupied, and by August that year, his own officer, Shankar Das, recorded the defacements that he had seen there (Das 1948). He reported that

> a number of stones inside Sher Shah's Mosque at Purana Qila have been broken by the refugees intentionally. Out of this damaged lot unique pieces of carved marble in the Mihrab have been mutilated.

> Attempts were also made to rake out black marble ornaments from the geometrical pattern incised in the splays adjoining the Mihrab. Some of the Refugees have started sleeping on the 'Charpois' inside the Prayer Chamber and shoes are freely moved about.

During his inspection, he also found the prayer chamber of the mosque littered with bricks and pebbles, obviously used for causing injuries to the structure. He therefore requested that 'the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation may please be sounded so that this lovely mosque is saved from further acts of vandalism'. No action appears to have been taken. In December 1949, another Survey officer, K.N. Puri, once again wrote to the chief commissioner about what he had observed during his inspection (Puri 1949):

> I was shocked to see some brick marks on the central Mehrab of the Sher Shah's Mosque. Brickbats were also seen piled at one corner. Somebody appeared to have worked for its mutilation. Fortunately the bricks themselves being of war quality could not achieve the purpose for which they were used, as the injuries inflicted were not very serious. This was obviously the task of school children who could not administer sound blows to the marble ornamentation. The school was on and the students as well as the teachers were moving in the mosque with shoes on. Chairs were found spread up both in the Lawn and the outer court. It is a pity that inspite of various letters having been issued to responsible quarters due sympathy and cooperation should not have been invoked to save this gem in the history of Indian Architecture.

This episode, in retrospect, compels us to recall that protected monuments that had become refugee camps after 1947, for all practical purposes, were not in the Survey's custody. Under these circumstances, all the Survey could do was inspect monuments and prepare notes of strong protest—which it did—about how its suggestions were being completely disregarded by those in charge of relief and rehabilitation. Unfortunately, since the primary intention of the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation was to house as many refugees as possible with no concern at all for the historic surroundings that housed them, the damage caused to some of the monuments was appalling.

To create usable spaces, the camp commandants themselves,

working under the ministry, carried out mindless mutilations. For instance, around Arab ki Sarai, where a vocational training centre was to be set up, ruthless removal and renovation was the order of the day. Das, again acting as the ASI's watchdog, filed the following report, after inspecting the site (Das 1949):

> Having been informed that the authorities of vocational Training Centre at Arab Sarai were still continuing with their activities of making additions and alterations to the ancient structures within the enclosures of Arab Sarai, I inspected the monument last evening and was wonder struck at the amazing speed with which the acts of vandalism were being perpetrated on the silent edifices belonging to the early Moghul period. The walls of the mosque known as Afsar Wala were being demolished according to their pre-planned designs. The historic northern enclosure between the Bu-Halima's Gate and the western entrance to the Humayun's Mausoleum was being bored through at various sections with heavy blows of jimpers and pick-axes. The demolitions and the new constructions were going on simultaneously and that too at a top speed. Even the magnificent gate in this wall which once stood over the highway winding its way from Purana Qila down into the Sarai and opening through the Jahangiri Gate was not spared. Perforations were made in its wall and wooden frames for doors and windows fitted.

Rather than seeking ways to undo this damage, the minister of relief and rehabilitation, Mohan Lal Saksena, suggested that Arab ki Sarai should simply cease to be a monument protected under the Monuments Act. The Survey appears to have been outraged at the suggestion. The monument was visited by Maulana Azad, minister of education (the Survey was a department under the Ministry of Education). He very clearly articulated his views that the demolitions and alterations there showed that the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation had not kept its promise of preserving the integrity of the monument (Masud 1949). Such instances demonstrate that when the task of protecting monuments was in conflict with relief and rehabilitation work, monument protection invariably lost out.

If monuments were defaced by the relief and rehabilitation ministry in Delhi, similar damage was inflicted by the Indian army

on the Gol Gumbad monument complex in western India (for details, see File no. 159/5/48). Here too, the Survey was not consulted. The occupation of the monument was the result of an unusual situation in the adjacent princely state of Hyderabad whose recalcitrant ruler was unwilling to politically integrate with India. The Indian army was asked to take control of the state and in preparation for this, army detachments had moved into the border areas around Hyderabad state, with Bijapur being one such border district.

In Bijapur, without getting prior permission from the Survey, parts of the seventeenth-century Gol Gumbad complex were taken over. This tomb is located in the heart of the city and, with one of the largest dome structures in the world, is Bijapur's most splendid monumental complex. There are large open garden stretches around the tomb. Rather than pitching tents in the open spaces, the army occupied the historic buildings. A particularly jarring instance was the occupation for residential purposes of the mosque attached to the Gumbad. Latrines were built behind the mosque and compound walls were broken at places for the entry of lorries. As the Survey pointed out, this amounted to nothing short of sacrilege (Deshpande 1948). The saving grace was that when this matter was taken up by the director general of the Survey with the Defence Department, the buildings were immediately vacated by the troops.

Not surprisingly, these measures attracted adverse publicity in Pakistan and internationally. Enquiries about various Muslim shrines were regularly made by the Pakistan government (for details, see File no. 15C/2/48). On many occasions, photographs appeared to show how the Government of India was treating its Islamic monuments. Ruined gardens, gaps in fortifications made for egress and ingress of refugees, soot-blackened tombs, bulldozer operations levelling mounds that contained foundations of old habitations inside monument compounds—these figure frequently in the letters and memos of the Survey, and, surely, they must have figured in media reports as well.

By the early 1950s, as the refugees moved out it was, as always, the Archaeological Survey, as the institutional guardian of protected monuments, that immediately got down to the business of repairing

and restoring them. These repairs also find mention in the Survey's annual publication, although in a somewhat low-key way, quite unlike the vivid details about mistreated monuments that are recorded in its files. For instance, when the repairs to Kotla Firoz Shah at Delhi were discussed, the Survey recorded that 'like many other monuments in Delhi, this citadel, occupied by refugees for about two years, was cleared of all squatters. The roads were properly repaired; low sections of the walls were raised on the old lines to check trespass; joints where mortar had fallen out were filled and pointed, and the rough rubble-stone paving near the main entrance was repaired' (*Indian Archaeology—A Review* 1953–4: 16). Such repairs were carried out with commendable speed and so thoroughly that hardly anyone who visits those monuments is aware of the tribulations and travails undergone by them more than six decades ago. These rusted incidents recounted here have simply been relegated the dust heap of forgotten histories.

Incidentally, what is known about the fate of monuments in India after Partition is qualitatively quite different from the documentation that exists on looted war art and the collateral damage to Europe's monuments during the Second World War (Moorhead 1995). The work of the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Group that came behind the Allied armies, for instance, as it reported on the state of artistic monuments and attempted to stop Allied forces, often unsuccessfully, from billeting in historic buildings, is well researched. In India, on the other hand, there are no published records of what was destroyed or desecrated during the Partition. Such details have simply remained buried in the archives of government departments.

In the aftermath of 1947, the state clearly straddled a fine ethical line between a thorough presentation of the enormity of the trauma that accompanied Partition and a selective rendering of India's liberation and independence. A public articulation of the damage that Islamic monuments had suffered, for instance, may have exacerbated the fresh wounds of communal riots and displacement. Moreover, in a situation where India was coping with the loss of property and life of close to eight million people who had poured

in after Independence, the primary focus was on the successful settlement of refugees.

What is less sustainable in ethical terms, though, is that this silence continued in the following decades. In fact, a selective amnesia about the horrors of Partition extended from historical writings on 1947 to public representations of that juncture. Consequently, 1947 came to be more often seen as a moment of liberation and less as a 'tormenting history of displacement' (Pandey 1997: 2271). A scholarly recovery of the suppressed history and memories of Partition has been systematically pursued only from the 1990s. Why this happened is not entirely clear. One possible reason may be the fact that the pogroms and riots following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984 and the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992 made communal terror part of the lived reality of many middle-class Indians (which include historians) (ibid.: 2261). This is likely to have made scholars more receptive to the task of documenting and understanding memories—of a generation that had experienced it and was still alive—of similar events at the time of Independence. Whatever the reasons, cameo histories of rousing speeches and national celebration at Independence have given way to writings that are woven around the anger, hardships, and scars of citizens and dispossessed refugees.

If more inclusive historical narratives have since been produced by integrating Partition memories and traumas into the story of the birthing of India and Pakistan, government recognition continues to lag. There is no memorial to the victims of Partition. Nor has the state thought it necessary to create a museum around the wealth of photographs, documents, oral histories, memorabilia, and archaeological exhibits of that era. Evidently, making generations of Indians aware of what they had not experienced directly in their own lives does not extend to the landscape of Partition.

Coming back to the damage and destruction that Islamic monuments suffered, how would an explicit recognition of this have helped in policymaking? Perhaps, such a recognition could have become the starting point for putting institutional mechanisms

and legislation in place for protecting monuments and cultural markers in situations of strife and conflict. Laws and decrees in themselves, though, are never sufficient. The non-application of the framework for the protection of cultural property in The Hague Convention in cases of armed conflict is well known. Croatia in the 1990s is one example which demonstrates that even with preventive measures, where the government of Croatia specifically directed the protection of its cultural heritage, because of what has been described as 'an unexpected and undeclared war', enormous damage was sustained (Sulc 2001: 160ff). At the same time, the task of assessing this damage and the scale of losses to movable and fixed cultural heritage was seen there as a state responsibility, according to instructions passed in 1993 on the implementation of the Law on Ascertaining War Damage.

A similar stocktaking of the violence done to its people and its cultural heritage was never done in India. This, and the lack of any commemoration or representation of the scars that accompanied Independence, has meant that there simply has been no public confrontation of that pain and destruction.

Partitioning Museums and Archaeological Collections

If monuments in 1947 became part of the heritage of either India or Pakistan depending on where they were located, how were antiquities and museum collections divided? On the face of it, this could have been a fairly straightforward exercise since the division could be done either by sharing the antiquities or on the basis of where the sites were located. As things turned out, however, the negotiations were prolonged and convoluted. Ultimately, the solution that was arrived at was based more on goodwill and compromise than on the legal principles on the basis of which they were supposed to be partitioned. As we shall see, though, in searching for a solution that was equitable to both nations, what was unfortunately sacrificed was the principle of preserving the integrity of some of the antiquities themselves.

The Partition Council in October 1947 had resolved that

museums would be divided on a territorial basis (Minutes 1949). This council, set up to deal with the administrative consequences of Partition, decided on a wide range of issues, from revenue and domicile to records and museums. With regard to its decision about a territorial division of museums, the council stipulated that when the territory of a province was partitioned, the museum exhibits of the provincial museums would also be physically divided. A subcommittee made up of officials from India and Pakistan was set up to recommend the procedure for the division of museum exhibits in accordance with the decision of the Partition Council. On this basis, the exhibits in the Lahore Museum, which had belonged to the United Province of Punjab before Partition, were to be split between East Punjab (in India) and West Punjab (in Pakistan). This was straightforward enough.

More complicated was the fate of objects that had been sent on temporary loan to places which, on 15 August 1947, happened to be on the wrong side of the border, far away from the original museums to which they belonged. On that date, there were objects in India from Harappa and Mohenjodaro, the earliest Bronze Age cities of the Indian subcontinent. There were also objects from Taxila in India, and an important collection of antiquities in London. The antiquities in London were on loan to the Royal Academy of Arts. In its wisdom, therefore, the Partition Council ruled that all objects that had been removed for temporary display after 1 January 1947 were to be returned to the original museums.

For Pakistan, this did not pose any problems in relation to most museums as nothing had been removed from their precincts after 1 January. At Harappa, some antiquities had been taken out of the site museum in July and September 1946, and these Pakistan was willing to treat as belonging to India. Similarly, there were more than 2000 antiquities, as also notebooks, drawings, and maps from the Excavations Branch in Taxila, which had been taken to New Delhi in July and August 1947, some a little earlier. These were to be made over to Pakistan (Superintendent 1949).

The real problem, though, revolved around the antiquities of Mohenjodaro.

This is because, on the day of Partition, as many as 12,000 objects from Mohenjodaro were in Delhi. Since Mohenjodaro fell within the territory of Pakistan, the objects should have fallen in its share. However, India's negotiators maintained that these rightfully belonged to India because they had not been removed after 1 January 1947 from the original museum (which was at Mohenjodaro) but came from Lahore. Similarly, they had not been removed for the purposes of temporary display but because, as early as 1944, the director general of archaeology, Mortimer Wheeler, had wanted to concentrate all the best Indus objects in a Central National Museum (Minutes 1949). It was in the absence of such a museum that it had been decided that the Lahore Museum would act as a substitute, pending the establishment of a Central National Museum. Wheeler had continued to reiterate that 'all objects from Mohenjodaro now on exhibition at Lahore are deposited by the Central Government on loan, and the Punjab Government has no lien upon them'. Pakistani officials, on the other hand, put forth the argument that the bulk of the antiquities were intended for Lahore and only a representative collection for the proposed Central National Museum (ibid.). Some emphasis was placed by them on the words in Wheeler's letter of May 1944 where he had made clear that the Mohenjodaro objects were on 'long loan' (which they believed was the same as 'indefinite loan') to the Lahore Museum. The same letter had also mentioned that it was in the absence of a Central National Museum that the most 'suitable repository' would be the Lahore Museum (ibid.: Annexure VI).

It was this—the question of the intention about the future disposal of the objects in a Central National Museum—that was central to the dispute around how the antiquities were to be divided. Several formulas were suggested and rejected, and pressure tactics were used by both parties. In order to make things difficult, the West Punjab government postponed the actual handing over of East Punjab's share of the Lahore Museum holdings till such time that India had handed over to Pakistan its share from the central museums. And a final decision on the central museums remained pending till the Mohenjodaro matter was sorted out.

That India considered Indus objects to be an integral part of its own heritage was equally an issue. N.P. Chakravarti who succeeded Wheeler as director general in 1948, said it in so many words when he declared that 'The Indus Valley Civilisation as such does not merely represent the civilisation of Pakistan but has a direct bearing on the civilisation of the whole of India and Pakistan and certainly the 300 million in India have quite a large interest in that civilisation, particularly as India has no longer any jurisdiction over these sites' (Chakravarti 1949). By then, in fact, because major Indus sites were 'lost' to India, finding forgotten Indus cities in India was being seen as a priority area of research.

Even before negotiations around Mohenjodaro's collection had begun, as early as March 1948, K.M. Panikkar—a scholar administrator who had served as one of the seniormost ministers in the princely state of Bikaner—had written to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru about the necessity of a survey of Bikaner and Jaisalmer. As he put it (Panikkar 1948),

> with the separation of the Pakistan Provinces, the main sites of what was known as the Indus Valley Civilisation has gone to Pakistan. It is clearly of the utmost importance that archaeological work in connection with this early period of Indian history must be continuted in India. A preliminary examination has shown that the centre of the early civilisation was not Sind or the Indus valley but the desert area in Bikaner and Jaisalmer through which the ancient river Saraswati flowed into the gulf of Kutch at one time.

Nehru promptly agreed with the suggestion which was conveyed to the Survey, and with his support, money was also allocated for it. Consequently, in 1950, Amalananda Ghosh of the Archaeological Survey began an exploration of Bikaner, and within a couple of months found as many as seventy sites, fifteen of which yielded the same types of antiquities that had been found at Harappa and Mohenjodaro.

As it turned out, Chakravarti's observation about the Indus civilization being part of the civilization of India and Pakistan was prescient. When Chakravarti wrote, such sites could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Gujarat has more than a hundred

Harappan sites today; around 1947, Rangpur was perhaps the only site which had been reported and studied. It was this paucity of sites that Chakravarti had in mind as he presided over a partitioning of museum collections which would help India keep some of the Harappan material from Indus cities in Pakistan.

Eventually, after many rounds of negotiations and a massive exchange of correspondence, the Museum Committee in 1949 agreed to a division down the middle. As the note on the division of antiquities between India and Pakistan put it, 'India wish that a decision shall be made upon a basis which provides a firm foundation for future good-will and collaboration between the Archaeological Departments of the two Dominions. Pakistan is actuated by the same consideration, and, with this end in view, both Dominions agree to accept a 50/50 division of the Mohenjodaro and Chanhu-daro collections' (Division of antiquities between India and Pakistan 1949). More than 14,000 antiquities from the Indus sites were divided in this way (Deputy Director General 1949). This physical division, as it came to be implemented, covered all kinds of Indus objects ranging from seals and statuary to ordinary artefacts of stone, clay, and metal. Even potsherds were equally apportioned, though Pakistan waived all claims to any share in the skeletal material from Mohenjodaro and Harappa. Pakistan was also expected to give India as comprehensive a duplicate collection as possible from Taxila.

The suggestion to divide the Indus collections into two equal parts came from Mortimer Wheeler who, after completing his term as director general of Archaeology in India, had become archaeological advisor to the Government of Pakistan. Wheeler's letter containing this suggestion also proposed a way of dealing with unique articles that could be divided as, for instance, jewellery made up of beads and spacers (Wheeler 1949a). Here, too, he suggested absolute equity (Figs 5.6 and 5.7).

That this suggestion was accepted (with the division being eventually done by Wheeler himself), in retrospect, was tragic. Four articles were fragmented 'equitably' because this formula was foisted unthinkingly on them, that too by an archaeologist who, above

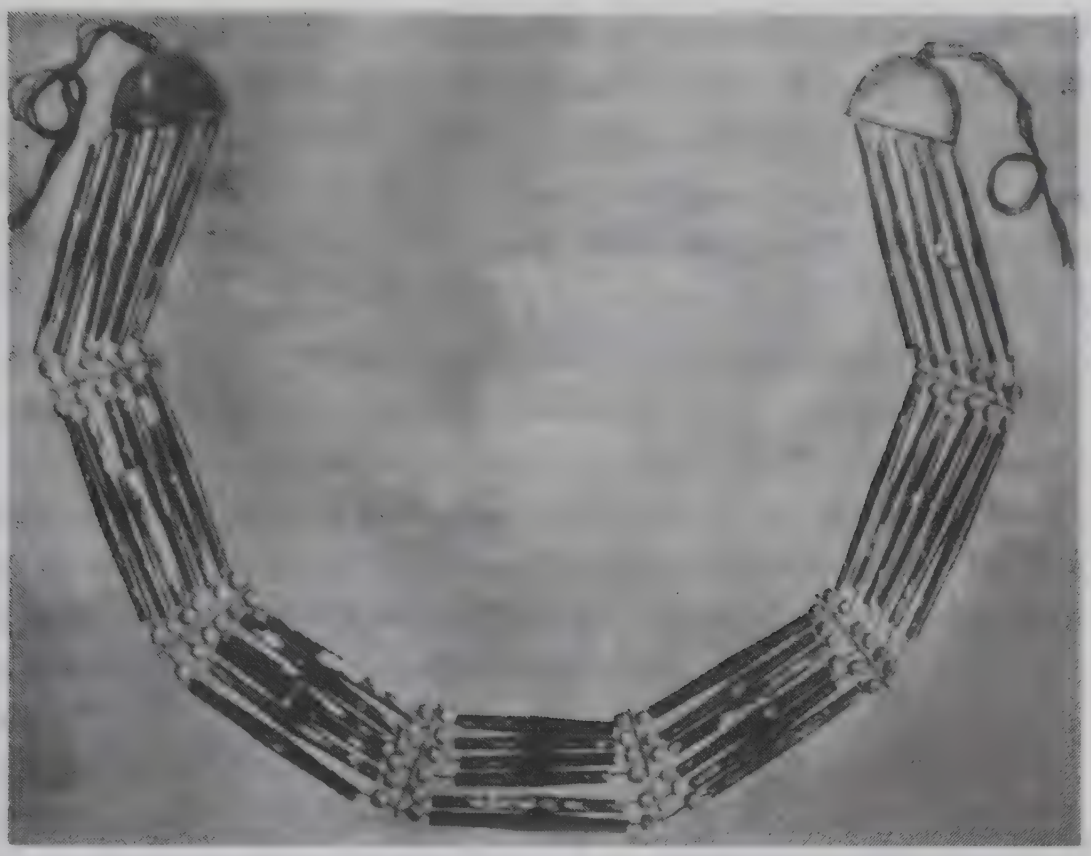


Fig. 5.6: Mohenjodaro girdle

Fig. 5.7: Mohenjodaro necklace

all, should have known that he was severely compromising the integrity of these objects. These were two gold necklaces from Taxila, a carnelian and copper girdle from Mohenjodaro, and a magnificent Mohenjodaro necklace made up of jade beads, gold discs, and semi-precious stones. They were broken up and divided down the middle. An office note describes this division (Director General of archaeology's office note 1949).

The exhibits are to be divided as follows:

> India and Pakistan should receive equal share of the two terminals, 42 elongated carnelian beads, 72 small globular beads and six spacers of the copper and carnelian girdle from Mohenjodaro (item 8 of list IA, Royal Academy Catalogue No. 29). The Mohenjodaro necklace (item No. 9 of list IA, Royal Academy Catalogue No. 23) consists of 10 jade beads, 55 spacers of gold disk, 7 pendants, and 10 semi-precious stones. Out of it India's share should consist of 5 jade beads, 27 spacers of gold disk, 4 pendants and 5 semi-precious stones. India should be allotted 4 pendants out of 7, since in dividing Taxila gold necklace No. 8885 Sirkap only 12 beads and a terminal were given to India as against 13 beads and one terminal to Pakistan. The two gold necklaces from Taxila (Items 5 and 15 of List II) are to be divided equally.

Oddly enough, nowhere in the correspondence is there a sense that the character of these objects was being permanently destroyed. There is, instead, an overriding anxiety about carefully adhering to the arithmetic of division. Once this was completed, again, there was only a sense of relief that the work of division had been completed successfully. Mortimer Wheeler's (1949b) letter from London to the director general of Archaeology captures this:

> On Tuesday, the 14th, we completed the partitioning of the Royal Academy collections and on Wednesday squared everything with the customs authorities.
>
> Mitra turned up on behalf of India, and everything went very smoothly and easily. As usual, India won the toss on the two occasions when we had to toss for odd things. You seem to have won down the line.

Situations like this surely raise a larger issue about the desirability of equity as the overriding principle on which museum collections and antiquities should have been divided. In the case of India and Pakistan, the destruction of the integrity of monuments had been an important area of concern since the latter part of the nineteenth century, and it is somewhat amazing that such concerns were not articulated post-Independence with reference to the above-mentioned artefacts. This is especially surprising since in 1947 itself the relics and relic caskets of two of the Buddha's disciples that had been taken away, presumably from Sanchi, in the nineteenth century were being brought back to be enshrined at Sanchi. However, in the case of collections that were the subject of dispute, archaeologists and negotiators, in their anxiety to adhere to what was politic, ignored the more ethical option. In the bargain, the past came to be partitioned in this unfortunate way.

Now, many decades later, is there a way in which this can be undone? Surely, India and Pakistan can learn from the example of the two pieces of a bronze sculpture of what was originally attributed to Bartolomeo Bellano but is now recognized as the work of Severo Calzetta da Ravenna; one of which was in the National Gallery of Washington while the other was at the Louvre in Paris. When the two pieces were discovered to be parts of a single sculpture—St Christopher Carrying the Christ Child with the Globe of the World—the National Gallery gave the sculpture on permanent loan to the Louvre. Since 1973, this sculpture has been there on the principle that the aesthetic value of the reunited sculpture is greater than the value of its dismembered parts. The Louvre, in turn, has, on occasion, loaned the sculpture to the National Gallery for display.

In much the same way, with a modicum of good faith on both sides, the Mohenjodaro and Taxila beads and terminals can be reunited. While this would not change the principles on which the pasts of India and Pakistan were partitioned, it will certainly restore some integrity to those objects and collections. In the process, such an arrangement will also underline that these form part of the common heritage of both nation-states. The question

remains, however, whether there is political will to overcome rifts in order to reunite a fractured heritage.

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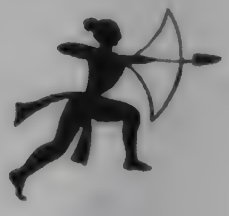
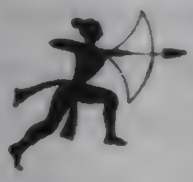
PART II



Artefacts and Landscapes

6

Harappa and Ancient Trade Routes



Introduction

THE THIRD MILLENNIUM BC CITY OF HARAPPA IS generally recognized as one that is marked by a wide variety of goods made from an equally wide variety of raw materials. The source areas from where such raw materials were accessed, though, are little understood. The most reliable way of identifying the locales from where these resources were accessed is through scientific 'provenance studies'. However, pending the availability of such data, this essay looks at the distribution and availability of the raw materials used at Harappa in various regions with which it appears to have interacted, as also the geographical possibilities of the movements of such diverse raw materials from there. This is an archaeologically feasible approach for working out trade routes and lines of communication and the validity of this approach in the case of Harappa also holds true for the Indus civilization as a whole (Lahiri 1991).

Originally published in 1990 as 'Harappa as a Centre of Trade and Routes: A Case Study of the Resource-Use, Resource-Access and Lines of Communication in the Indus Civilization', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 27 (4): 405–44.

Sahiwal as the Immediate Hinterland of Harappa

Sahiwal is what the former Montgomery district of pre-Partition Punjab is now called. The physical aspect of this region has a number of dimensions of which three are relevant for understanding the spatial location of Harappa. Harappa was the most commanding urban centre of the Punjab plains (Vats 1940: 3). The Ravi today flows about six miles north of Harappa, but the site itself is situated besides the confluence of the two dried-up beds of this river, one of which is clearly shown on the site map (ibid., II: Plate 1).

First, Harappa was situated in a region which, despite sections of it being inhospitable, traditionally used to support both agriculture and nomadic pastoralism (*Imperial Gazetteer of India* 1890: 492–502). This region, known as the Bari *doab*, presents a striking physical contrast between its riverine fringes and the interior uplands. While the inundation of the Ravi and Sutlej rivers along with wells, even before the beginning of large-scale canal irrigation, supported agriculture consisting of wheat, rice, gram, barley, cotton, and so on in the alluvial stretches along their banks in the beginning of the nineteenth century, the central plateau beyond the rivers was made up of an arid, desert-like upland used primarily for herding cattle, donkeys, horses, etc., belonging to scattered nomadic families consisting mainly of the Ravi Jats. In fact, a large number of camels used to be bred there for export to Lahore, Amritsar, and Gujranwala. Jungle tracts were found sometimes along the rivers and in some sections of the interior. The most common trees were the *ukhan* (*Tamarix articulata*), *kikar* (*Acacia arabica*), *ber* (*Capparis spinosa*), *karil* (*Capparis aphylla*), and *jhau* (*Tamarix gallica*), along with specimens near Gugaira of most trees found in the plains of North India. These jungles must have been much more considerable in the protohistoric period but, even in the nineteenth-century context, notices of impenetrable jungles 'impassable alike for man or horse' exist, and one is not surprised to note that along with jackals, ravine deer, and nilgai, tigers used to

occasionally haunt the neighbourhood of the Sutlej. Quite clearly, then, physiographic conditions sufficient to support a substantial non-productive urban population at Harappa must have existed in the third millennium BC.

Second, the former Montgomery district was predominantly rural, an aspect which emerges quite clearly from the various census reports. For instance, the 1881 Census noted 1,614 villages with over a thousand of them returning a population of less than 200 inhabitants. There were only two towns, Kamalia and Pak Pattan, and even Montgomery, the headquarters station, was like a large village with a mere 3178 inhabitants. To locate the mature Indus site of Harappa within this traditional settlement structure is clearly problematic. Whether it is due to a lack of intensive exploration or because of dense forest cover (Fentress 1982: 250), Harappa cannot be archaeologically visualized as being supported by a hinterland of small sites. In its immediate periphery, there is only one other reported site—Chak Purbane Syal (Vats 1940: 475). Incidentally, in the early historic period as well the settlement pattern seems to be similar where Alexander's historians notwithstanding, the Bari *doab* presents a singularly sparse archaeological landscape (Chakrabarti 1972: 290–1).

Third, the Bari *doab* is minerally barren, saltpetre and *kankar* or calcareous concrete being the only locally available resources. The occurrence of a wide variety of minerals and raw materials in the excavations at Harappa contrasts strikingly with this facet of the Bari *doab*. Harappa was procuring these items from outside the immediate hinterland, and this commerce was indispensable in supporting the city's varied manufacturing and craft activities. Any study of the trade and trade routes of Harappa must mark out this aspect as the crucial area of enquiry.

This trade and commerce was helped by the location of the Bari *doab* and the general directions of routes which used to traditionally converge there. Sahiwal falls within the former Multan division of the Punjab which has, over the centuries, acted as a major funnel between the regions to the north and Sind on the one hand, and Rajasthan and other regions to the east on the other.

There were, of course, a variety of routes of communication from Sahiwal connecting up with different geographical points. For instance, it was possible to approach the eastern Punjab region along the line followed by the Multan railway into Lahore and through that district into the Indo-Gangetic divide. At the same time, the Sutlej river could be crossed at Pak Pattan to reach the Cholistan tract through which lay another route going into the Indo-Gangetic divide. However, a study of the lines of communication involves not so much a description of these routes as an exploration of the possibilities of identifying ways in which their varying significance, at different points in time, can be established. The basic attempt here is to outline the significant lines of communication leading to Harappa, in the light of the resources used at the site and their availability in different regional pockets.

Data on Trade and Interaction

The variety of raw materials—minerals, metals, animal products—that were utilized in the production of diverse artefacts at Harappa is clear from a reading of Chart 6.1 (Vats 1940: chs I–V, VIII, XI, XIII–XVIII). These raw materials were steatite, alabaster, ivory, shell, coral, carnelian, agate, jasper, chalcedony, jade, lapis lazuli, copper, silver, gold, lead, chert, sandstone, limestone, yellow Jaisalmer stone, flint, haematite, quartzite, basalt, *sang-i-abri*, marble, calcite, serpentine, feldspar, hornblende, slate, and granite.

Evidence of Manufacture of Finished Products at Harappa

Steatite

Manufacture of steatite seals seems to have been an important craft activity at Harappa. Twenty-three unfinished seals have been found from Mound F and Mound AB: No. 5551, No. 1204, No. 10260, No. 1239, No. 5219, No. 2785, No. 2731, No. 2394, No. 12104, No. 11012, No. 11040, No. 10998, No. 12140, No. 11432,

Chart 6.1: Distribution of Raw Materials at Harappa

Raw Material	*Artefacts*
STEATITE	Vases, seals, inlays, pendants, figurines, spacers, temple ornaments, finger rings, nose discs, amulet, ear ornament, plummet
ALABASTER	Dishes, vases, lids, pestle, palettes, maceheads, lingam, cone, ring bases, pedestals, handle, finger rings, inlay, fluted specimens
SHELL	Lingam, animal figurine, pieces, caps, ladles, spindle whorls, beads, temple ornaments, bangles, bracelets, amulets, balls, inlay, cores, fragments, waste
CORAL	Piece
IVORY	Animal figurine, lingam, bead, temple ornaments, awls, needles, hairpins, rod, comb, balusters, discs, strip, terminal, cones
CARNELIAN	Weights, baetyl, beads, ball, marbles, spheroid, necklaces
AGATE	Weights, beads, pendant
JASPER	Bead, pendants, chessman-shaped object
JADE	Beads, pendant
LAPIS LAZULI	Lingam, pendant, beads
COPPER	Macehead, vessels, hasp, adze, blade axe, latches, axes, chisels, cast bars, daggers, spearheads, knives, sickles, saws, scrapers, razors, gouges, lancehead, nail parer, toilet set, awl, chopper, needles, pins, rods, bangle, scale, mirror, fish hook, pieces, stylus, terminal, sheets, lumps, tube, beads, ear ornaments, bracelets, finger rings
SILVER	Vase, beads, temple ornaments, brooch, bangle, shell-inlaid boss, boss, bezel on copper ring, sheet, hook

GOLD	Beads, armlet, forehead ornament, hooks, bands, necklaces, foil, cylinders
LEAD	Ring, boss, wire
ORDINARY STONES	Chert weights, scrapers, cores, flakes, arrowhead, burnishers, knives; sandstone block, statuette, dice, lingams, querns, weights; limestone tablet, lingam; flint axe, core; quartzite cone; granite weights, pestles, celt, querns; limestone beads, maceheads, weight, dish; hornblende pendants, weight, lingam, ball, finial; Jaisalmer stone cap, cone, lingams, rings, inlay, palette; haematite beads. *sang-i-abri* slabs; basalt querns, pestles, palette, celt; slate weight; marble macehead, beads; calcite bead; diorite bead
SEMI-PRECIOUS STONES	Chalcedony ball, 'lingams', block, beads; crystal bead; feldspar beads, serpentine beads

No. 11440, No. 4432, No. 7113, No. 11768, one unfinished black steatite seal, and four unfinished rectangular seals of the plano-convex type which are not numbered (Vats 1940: 25, 38, 54, 71, 82, 113, 121–2, 125, 128, 134, 151, 156, 173, 179). Burnt steatite inlay work was also practised at the site; some such fluted specimens were found sticking to miscellaneous broken copper objects in a well in Trench IV, Mound F (ibid.: 462). Interestingly, a number of gouges made of bronze were recovered in the excavations, which, in the opinion of the excavator, with their semicircular cutting edges were used for fluting and grooving various kinds of materials, including stone (ibid.: 389). Steatite bead-making at Harappa is represented by one barrel-shaped unfinished steatite bead (ibid.: 71). A tapering unfinished steatite pendant (No. 4274), grooved at the end, has also been found (ibid.: 36).

Alabaster

Some inlay pieces of alabaster, lozenge-shaped with incurved sides, have been reported from Harappa (ibid.: 462).

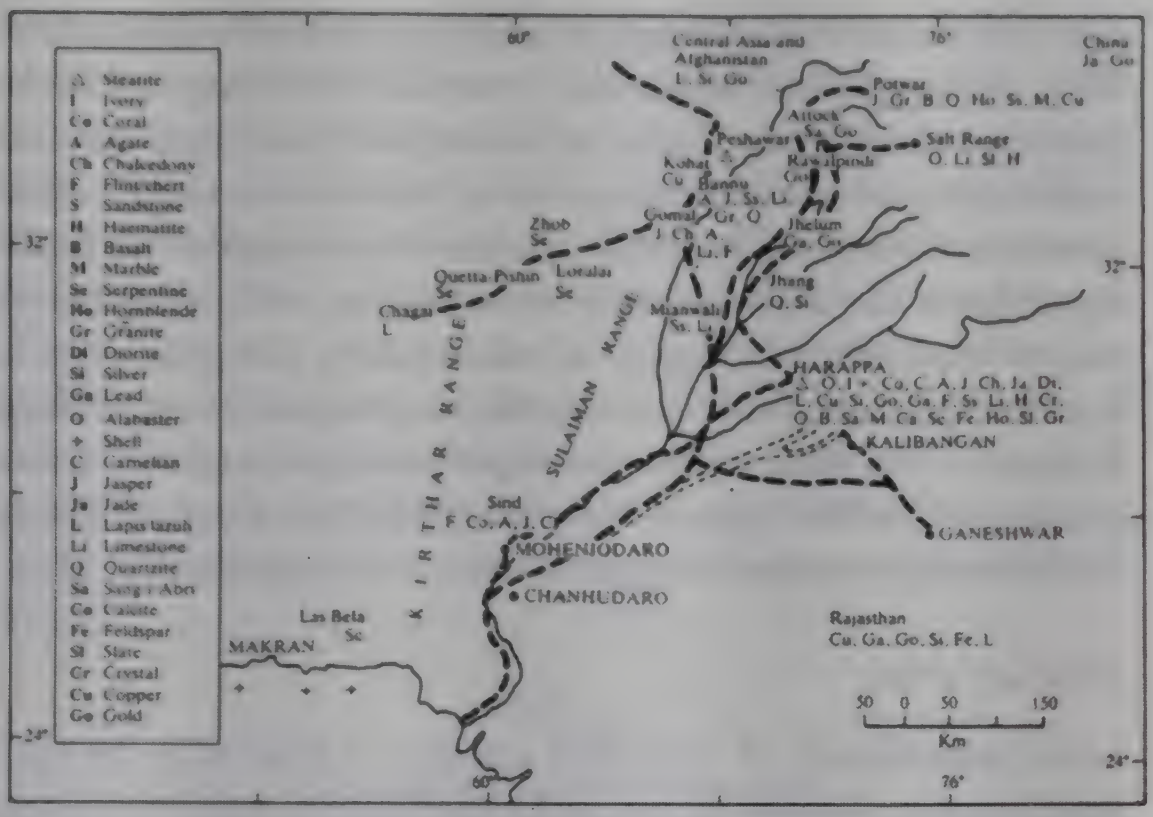


Fig. 6.1: Harappa—resource use, resource access and lines of communication

Shell

Marine gastropods *Turbinella pyrum* and *Fascolaria trapezium* were commonly used for manufacture, though nothing even remotely similar to the striking evidence of shell working at Mohenjodaro is available here. The evidence for shell working at the site includes some conch shells, five cores, and numerous other fragments weighing about four pounds in Mound F (Trench V, Stratum II, Trench I, Stratum III) (ibid.: 71, 82). A number of shell details for inlay were also recovered: thirty-eight heart-shaped pieces, three lozenge-shaped, two rectangular, five square, two triangular, one crescent-shaped, one fluted flat piece, six discoid, and six bar-shaped (ibid.: 71–3).

Semi-precious stones

One unbored, barrel-shaped bead of carnelian was found at Harappa (ibid.: 192). Agate beads were also locally manufactured. H.C. Beck in his 'Report on Selected Beads from Harappa' discussed the morphology of some unperforated circular and long-barrel

agate specimens that were sent to him for examination (ibid.: 399–400). Although he felt that they resembled the shape of Mesopotamian weights, the results, when they were weighed, were not sufficiently uniform for these specimens to have been weights. Beck contended that possibly all the specimens were unfinished beads. Apart from the above-mentioned beads, an unfinished barrel-shaped bead of banded agate, in which variety a large number of finished specimens have been found, was recovered from Mound F (ibid.: 114). Also, a crescent-shaped, unbored and unfinished pendant of banded agate is reported (ibid.: 98). One unfinished cuboid weight in banded agate has also been found (ibid.: 126).

Ordinary stones

Local manufacture of chert/flint artefacts is attested to by (*a*) a large number of cores; (*b*) two unfinished cubical weights; (*c*) large unfinished celts; (*d*) a flake (ibid.: 36, 39, 60, 104, 112, 159, 192), and (*e*) an unfinished tapering axe (ibid.: 107). Blocks of sandstone, sometimes with tubular drill holes as in the case of a rectangular, dressed but unpolished block of yellow sandstone, and the fragment of grey stone are other evidences of stone working (ibid.: 141). Weights in sandstone and slate also seem to have been manufactured here—two unfinished grey sandstone weights and one unfinished slate weight are reported (ibid.: 361–2). A small, unfinished quartzite cone is also reported (ibid.: 138). A square block of hornblende finished on the face and sides but with a rough protuberance on the reverse was noted at Mount AB (ibid.: 159).

Copper

Impressive evidence of copper/bronze working at Harappa is available from Vats's excavation report. This evidence includes a number of cast bars, one of which shows a few hammer marks, which, in the opinion of the excavator, were intended to be hammered out as chisels; unfinished bangle specimens which include one fragmentary uneven rod which was in the process of being beaten out into a solid bangle, two flat strips which, according

to Vats, were for making hollow bangles and two more flat strips which had only just been beaten out and flattened; lumps of copper and two large folded sheets of copper; other miscellaneous copper strips intended for either chisels or cobbler's awls; a cylindrical furnace in Mound F in which slag deposits were abundant; sixteen furnaces, located near 'workmen's quarters', which, although bereft of any artefactual evidence, in the light of intense firing in some of them, were designed, in the opinion of Vats, for the casting of metal objects; a shallow earthenware crucible, oval at the base with straight sides (ibid.: 80–90, 126, 150–1, 182, 470–3). Moreover, Table 6.1 notes the presence of slag in a number of urns (ibid.: 254ff).

Table 6.1

Contents of Post-cremation Urns

Urn No.	*Location*	*Remains*
1033B	Mound F, Trench I, Sq. 1711/16	Slag
3824	Mound F., G.G. Area, Sq. I 9/3	Bit of slag
3847	Mound F, G.G. Area, Sq. I 8/10	Some slag
5910	Mound AB, Trench Ex. P. I and II, Sq. P 23/10	Some slag
7174	Mound AB, Trench Ex. P. I and II. Sq. M 12/18	Some slag
7854	Mound F, Trench G.G. Area, Sq. M 12/18	Some slag
3905	Mound F, Trench G.G. Area, Sq. J 9/9	Some slag
7867	Mound F, Trench II, Sq. N 9/10	Several pieces of slag
	Mound F, Trench III, Sq. I 12/3	Copper scum, slag
xxxv	Mound AB, Trench S.E., Sq. Q 27/20	Slag pieces
7863	Mound F, Trench G.G. Area, Sq. K 9/3	A lot of slag
10252	Mound F, Trench IV, Sq. I 12/4	Some slag
7840	Mound F, Trench G.G. Area, Sq. I 9/1	A piece of slag

The report also noted the presence of several 'long pieces of slag' in an earthenware jar in Square HG/23 (ibid.: 27).

Source Areas of Raw Materials

Unlike Sind, where the Kirthar piedmont and its outliers provided some of the basic stones that were used at the Harappan sites of the region, Harappa was located in a subregion which did not contain any of the minerals and metals exploited at the site within its ambit. The presence of these raw materials outside the Bari *doab*, in regions which were either contiguous to it or displayed other cultural contacts with Harappa, is highlighted here. Of course, the mere occurrence of a resource does not necessarily mean that it was accessed from there. However, pending a wider application of scientific techniques to solve the problem of raw material–artefact correlation, the formulation of the distribution pattern of these raw materials, on the basis of geological reports, gazetteers, nineteenth-century travel literature, and other publications, in the probable areas which formed a part of the 'contact zone' of Harappa is the only useful method of analysis. The protohistoric pattern of exploitation of such raw materials in the various subregions where they naturally occur has also been taken into account, since such data strengthen the possibility of these resources reaching Harappa, in finished or unfinished form. Although the presence of pre-industrial traditions of raw material exploitation is specified here, it is entirely possible that this was not always known. Generally, however, local people are aware of the presence of mineral wealth in their neighbourhood. This has been noted by a number of scholars closely associated with studies of pre-industrial mining and metallurgy, a surmise that is also clearly argued in the following extract from La Touche on the Kashmir region (cited in Lawrence 1895: 61):

> I think that I am not far wrong in saying that in very few instances in India have useful minerals been discovered in localities that were unknown to the natives, and in which the ores had not been worked by them at one time or another. . . . To take a single instance, the Khasis of Assam, who, till the beginning of the present century had hardly felt the influence of Western civilization, have for ages obtained their iron from an ore which occurs as minute grains of magnetite

disseminated in the granite of their hills. Many a highly trained European geologist might justly have been sceptical as to the possibility of obtaining a productive iron ore from granite, and would very possibly have passed the rock over as being utterly useless for such a purpose.

Upper Indus Plains and the North West Frontier Province

Steatite

Coggin Brown and Dey (1955: 529) mention two steatite bearing localities at Kangrara in the North West Frontier Province, 30 miles from Abbottabad, where there was significant steatite production till 1948; and in Nowshera tehsil of Peshawar district, where there were old pits in altered Attock shales, near Khund, from where the local inhabitants apparently obtained supplies.

Protohistoric tradition: The pre-Harappan pattern of distribution is as follows: in the Bannu basin, beads have been found at Lewan and seals at Tarakai Qila (Allchin *et al.* 1986: 95–7; Allchin and Knox 1981: 249); the Potwar plateau site of Sarai Khola has yielded beads (Halim 1972: 23–4).

Alabaster

Gypsum, from which alabaster was manufactured, occurs in the marl beds above the salt strata of the Salt Range: 'Beds of it seem to lie above and below the salt. The mineral is, for the most part, of light grey colour, with shades of blue, and translucent on the edges' (Gazetteer of the Jhelam District 1883–4: 29–30).

From places like Pind Dadun Khan, Mari, and Kalabagh, significant amounts of gypsum could be obtained.

Semi-precious stones

Bannu basin: In the Kurram-Tochi *doab*, crypto-crystalline silica material such as agate and jasper is found close to the localities of the pre-Harappan sites or within walking distance (Allchin et al. 1986: 63).

Gomal plain: Many varieties of crypto-crystalline silica such as jasper, chalcedony, and agate are found in large areas in north and south Waziristan (Khan 1979: 379).

Potwar plateau: John Marshall picked up specimens of jasper from the Tamra *nala* in the vicinity of the early historic centre of Taxila (Marshall 1951: 477).

Protohistoric tradition: In the pre-Harappan context, the Bannu basin site of Lewan yielded agate beads and microliths and jasper microliths (Allchin et al. 1986: 65, 137); the Potwar plateau sites of Sarai Khola (Halim 1972: 16) and Jhang (Mughal 1972: 132) have yielded agate beads, a jasper arrowhead, and carnelian beads; in the Gomal region sites of Rehman Dheri (Durrani 1854: 505–10; see also Khan 1979: 379) and Gumla (Dani 1970–1: 1–177) carnelian beads, agate beads and microliths, jasper beads, microliths, and a core were found. In the Harappan period also, carnelian, agate and jasper beads, and jasper and agate microliths were found in the Gomal valley sites of Rehman Dheri (Khan 1979: 375–403) and Gumla (Dani 1970–1: 47–88, 101).

Ordinary stones

Potwar plateau: The mineral wealth of this region is basically that of the Salt Range in which limestone occurrences are numerous. While estimating the salt occurrences in the mountains where the Kheura salt mines were located, it was noticed that the formation there, which was of nummulitic limestone, had an average thickness of 200 feet (*Gazetteer of the Jhelam District* 1883–4: 3). The Sarai Khola excavation report also noted the abundant availability in the area of limestone and slate stones (Halim 1972: 11), while the Taxila report noted the presence of granite, basalt, quartzite, hornblende, sandstone, and marble in the Tamra *nala* (Marshall 1951).

Jhang district: In this district, which was the northernmost of the four districts of the former Multan division in undivided India, in the Kirana hills, quartzite and slate are found (*Gazetteer of the Jhang District* 1884: 3). In the nineteenth century, there were also several quarries in the hills near Chiniot, where millstones, pestles, mortars, and *mochi* blocks, etc., were made (ibid.).

Mianwali district: In this district, which was the extreme south-west region of the Rawalpindi division of undivided Punjab, the Dhak range contained soft grey and greenish sandstone and nummulitic limestone (*Gazetteer of the Mianwali District* 1951: 8).

Gomal plain: Some of the limestone of the Mesozoic and tertiary periods contains chert which is brought down in the form of river pebbles by the Gomal and Takwara which drain the Gomal plain (Khan 1979: 379).

Bannu basin: Sandstone, limestone, granite, and quartzite are commonly found in this region (Allchin et al. 1986: 63).

Attock district: *Abri*, a lower cretaceous shell limestone of a variegated chocolate and yellow colour, is abundant in this district (Marshall 1951).

Protohistoric tradition: A number of the above-mentioned stones were utilized in the pre-Harappan context: in the Potwar region, Sarai Khola has yielded granite celts, limestone chisels, grinding slabs and a macehead, and slatestone chisels (Halim 1972: 7–15); in the Gomal region, Gumla (Dani 1967: 97–9) and Rehman Dheri (Khan 1979: 379) have yielded chert microliths; Lewan in the Bannu basin has yielded sandstone, quartzite, and granite artefacts including grinding stones, palettes, and ringstones (Allichin et al. 1986: 39ff, 61). In the period of the Harappan civilization, the Gomal valley sites of Gumla (Dani 1967: 92ff), Rehman Dheri (Khan 1979), Karam Shah (Dani 1967: 23), Bud ki Dheri (ibid.: 32) and Hathala (ibid.: 88–102) contain chert/flint microliths in their artefactual repertoires.

Copper

Potwar plateau: Valentine Ball noted in the Salt Range the presence of beds which were called copper shales owing to the presence of small nodules of copper sulphide. These, however, were not of great economic value and Wynne of the Geological Survey of India did not find *in situ* nodules (Ball 1881: 266). R.D. Oldham also noted that 'some traces of copper in the form of small nodules of

copper glance have been discovered in these shales, but these concretions are of rare occurrence' (Oldham 1893: 489).

Protohistoric tradition: The pre-Harappan distribution of copper/bronze artefacts, is as follows: in the Bannu basin, which lies south of Kohat district, rods, sheeting, a triangle, and fragments of copper were found at Lewan (Allchin *et al.* 1986: 179), and fragments at Tarakai Qila (Allchin and Knox 1981: 249); Sarai Khola, in the Potwar region, yielded bangles, pins, needles, a nail parer, a ring, and a spheroid (Halim 1972: 18–19).

Lead

Jhelum district: In Jhelum district, in two or three localities of the Salt Range, lead is found in small nodules (*Gazetteer of the Jhelam District* 1883–4: 30). The best quality is said to occur in a place called Mount Karangali. Lead occurrences in the district were chiefly in clefts in the most inaccessible precipices of hills, and 'peasants' in the nineteenth century used to search for it by letting themselves down the face of the precipice and picking out the mineral from the clefts.

Gold

Alluvial gold occurs in various rivers and streams in this region and has been known to be extracted in the past. The occurrences are as follows.

Attock district: Here, gold is found on the banks of the Indus river (*Gazetteer of the Rawalpindi District* 1895: 21). In the nineteenth century, the right to extract this precious metal was granted yearly to a contractor (the rate in 1884 being Rs 120). Apart from the Indus, gold was also found in the sands of other streams like the Raish, Sil, and Sohan.

Rawalpindi district: In this district, gold is found in the tributaries of the Jhelum and the Indus (ibid.). However, the alluvial gold yield was worth a mere Rs 300 in 1883–4.

Jhelum district: Gold occurrences noted in the old Jhelum district are as follows (*Gazetteer of the Jhelam District* 1883–4: 25):

> Here in the tertiary formation of the Salt Range gold is found in the shape of minute scales. . . . And in the beds of the' numerous *nallahs* or *kasis* which flow through the miocene formations, the sand is washed for gold. It seems to be obtained in the largest quantity towards the Indus, north of the Salt Range.

The rivers where alluvial gold is noteworthy are the Bunhar and the Kahari (La Touche 1918: 215). In the Bunhar river small quantities of gold from the sands yielded revenue of Rs 225 in 1883–4. The Kahari river contained gold in its junction below Rohtas and Bakrala.

Haematite

In the Salt Range, some earth iron haematites were found, though not in commercially viable quantity (*Gazetteer of the Jhelam District* 1883–4: 30).

Sind

Shell

The gastropod *Turbinella pyrum* is found all along the coast of Sind and Baluchistan, with its westernmost occurrence at Pasni, on the Makran coast (Kenoyer 1965: 301). Occasional specimens of *Fascolaria trapezium* are noted along the Sind and Makran coasts (ibid.: 306).

Protohistoric tradition: Balakot, situated on the Sonmiani bay, in its Harappan level, has provided impressive evidence of a local shell industry which used, among other shells, *Turbinella pyrum* for artefact manufacture (Dales 1979: 252–68). The remains include bangles and bangle fragments, implements, wasters, and other by-products of shell manufacture.

Coral

Although red or precious coral, *Corallium rubrum*, is gathered mainly from the Mediterranean and its islands, G. Watt (1889: 529), noted the remarks of Blanford on the presence of coral in Sind (Watt 1972: 529):

> some miles south of Lohari Lang, and near Murad Khan's '*band*' (dam) across the Habb river, a thin bed composed of corals appears a few feet above the base of the Gaj group. This bed can be traced for miles to the south. All the species of coral (five or six) are encrusting forms or small branching kinds. *A. Pachyseris*, or some closely allied form, and two or three species of *Hydnophora*, are specially common.

Blanford also noted a coral zone abounding in several species of coral near Nari (ibid.). Watt argued that some of them may have been of an ornamental type (ibid.: 531): 'it seems probable that in some of the passages already quoted, reference has been made to coral in a generic sense, some of the forms there mentioned being, strictly speaking, members of the series we have designated ornamental in contradistinction to reef-forming.'

Protohistoric tradition: Coral artefacts were found at pre-Harappan Ali Murad in south Sind (Majumdar 1934: 113–14).

Chert/Flint

Chert/flint is widely available in Sind (Aitken 1909: 26–9). Blanford also noted the presence of flint similar to that of the Rohri hills, 16 km west-north-west of Kotri and a dark brown chert throughout most of Sind Kohistan (cited in Flam 1986: 71). The best-known occurrences are those from the Sukkur and Rohri hills; in the latter region, in an area of approximately 40 by 16 km, a number of factory sites for the extraction and dressing of chert artefacts existed (B. Allchin 1979: 181–3).

Protohistoric tradition: Pre-Harappan finds are as follows: in south Sind, chert microliths were found at Amri (Majumdar 1934: 32), Damb Buthi (ibid.: 15), Ghazi Shah (ibid.: 86), Gorandi (ibid.: 87), Ali Murad (ibid.: 90), Kohtras Buthi (ibid.: 134), Othmanjo Buthi (ibid.: 141), Khajur (ibid.: 135), Lohri (ibid.: 67), Bandhni (ibid.: 122), Pandi Wahi (ibid.: 114), Chauro (ibid.: 125), and Tando Rahim Khan (ibid.: 105); at Kot Diji in upper Sind, chert microliths were recovered (Khan 1965: 13–85). In south Sind, Harappan period chert microliths were found at Dhal (Majumdar 1934: 26), Thano Bula Khan (ibid.: 142), Naru Waro Dharo (*Pakistan Archaeology* 1964: 44), Goth Hasan Ali (*Pakistan Archaeology*

1968: 2), Tharo on Gujo (*Pakistan Archaeology* 1964: 2), Amri (Majumdar 1934: 33), Allahadino (*Pakistan Archaeology* 1964: 9) Gharo Bhiro (Mughal 1972: 134), Kot Kori (Khan 1981: 43–6), Jhukar (Majumdar 1934: 10–18), Lohumjodaro (ibid.: 51–8), Lakhiyo (ibid.: 68), Ali-Murad (ibid.: 90), Shahjo Kotiro (ibid.: 137–9), Karchat (ibid.: 130), Mohenjodaro (Marshall 1931: 458), and Chanhudaro (Mackay 1942: 10–11, 230). Furthermore, striking similarities in the chert blades of Harappa and Sukkur have been outlined in B. Allchin's (1979: 186) analysis of the Harappan working floors there; the average width of the thirteen broken blades at Harappa, that is, 1.43 cm, is very close to those found on the Rohri hills as, for instance, at Sukkur, where the average width is 1.4 cm.

Semi-precious stones

Two archaeologists have referred to the occurrences of cryptocrystalline silica material in Sind. Walter Fairservis, Jr. (1982: 111) categorically mentioned that '. . . agate, jasper and carnelian are found in the Lyari hills, the Porali basin, the Kohistan and the Hab River Valley'. Louis Flam, relying on Blanford, noted chalcedony in the Laki hills, as well as agate, although the location of the latter is not mentioned (Flam 1986: 71).

Protohistoric tradition: Pre-Harappan agate and carnelian beads are known to occur at Ghazi Shah (Majumdar 1934: 65–7), Gorandi (ibid.: 90–1), and Ali Murad (ibid.: 102–6). A carnelian bead and some chalcedony weights were found at Thano Bula Khan (ibid.: 142), agate objects at Allahdino (*Pakistan Archaeology* 1964: 9), a jasper bead at Jhukar (Majumdar 1934: 10–18), a carnelian bead and chalcedony weight at Lohumjodaro (ibid.: 51–8), a carnelian bead and agate bead at Ali Murad (ibid.: 89–96), chalcedony beads at Karchat (ibid.: 130), carnelian beads, agate and jasper beads and weights at Mohenjodaro (Marshall 1931: 31–2, 104, 520, 536–41, 544), and carnelian lumps, pendants, beads, agate weights and unfinished beads, jasper beads and a weight and chalcedony beads at Chanhudaro (Mackay 1942: 43, 53, 202–4, 208–10, 226–7, 242, 244).

Baluchistan

Lapis lazuli

M. Usman Hasan noted the discovery of early mines of lapis lazuli in Chagai district of Baluchistan when he was taken there by the local people. The mines are located at Bi-Bi-Dick, about 35 miles north of Dalbandin near the Pakistan–Afghanistan border (Hasan 1986: 5)

Serpentine

Zhob-Loralai district: A number of igneous intrusions of gabbro altered into serpentine are found here (Minchin 1907a: 2 and 1907b: 27).

Quetta-Pishin district: Serpentine is found in the east of Pishin district (Buller and Rai 1907: 17).

Steatite

M.R. Mughal (1971: 194) mentioned the presence of steatite or talc in two localities in Zhob district, the significant deposits of which were mined north of Fort Sandeman in the past.

Rajasthan

Copper

The copper mineralization in Rajasthan is probably one of the most extensive that exists in India and is found in almost all areas in the state. Detailed accounts of these copper deposits are available in a number of works (Agarwal 1978; *Rajputana District Gazetteer* 1979, I), although the most comprehensive work in this regard is the documentation done by the Geological Survey of India (Raghunandan et al. 1981; 47). Chart 6.2 contains details of the various mineralized belts in Rajasthan, the nature of various deposits, and the presence of old workings. The old workings of copper in Bikaner state noted by K.D. Erskine at Bikramsar and Bidasar are of some significance (Erskine 1909: 351). James Todd's

Chart 6.2
Copper Deposits of Rajasthan

Sr.	*Deposit*	*Location*	*Code Evidence of Old Workings*
1.	*Khetri deposit* (Madhan Kudhan)	Jhunjhunu dist.	Pyrrhotite Chalcopyrite Pyrite	Extensive old workings with large mine dumps over a length of 1.5 kms
	Kolihan	Jhunjhunu dist.	Pyrrhotite Chalcopyrite Pyrite	Number of old workings
	Kalapahar	Jhunjhunu dist.	Pyrite Pyrrhotite Chalcopyrite	Old workings (450 m)
	Kolihan	Jhunjhunu dist.	Pyrrhotite Pyrite	Old workings (900m)
	Deoro	Jhunjhunu dist.	Chalcopyrite Pyrrhotite Pyrite	Old workings (210 m) and small slag heaps
	Papuma	Jhunjhunu dist.	Pyrrhotite Chalcopyrite Pyrite	Group of old workings at Badawali
	Dholamala	Jhunjhunu dist.	Chalcopyrite Pyrrhotite Pyrite	60 workings (450 m)
	Usri	3.5 km south-east of Khetri town	Pyrite Chalcopyrite Pyrrhotite	20 old workings (800 m)
	Rampur	Jhunjhunu dist.		Old workings with minor slag dumps (150 m)
	Taonda	Jhunjhunu dist.	–	Old workings (600 m)
	Malwali	Jbunjhunu dist.	–	Old workings
	Bokhri	Jhunjhunu dist.	–	Small pits (1.5 km)
	Sheopuragarh	Jhunjhunu dist.	–	Three small old workings
	Kakrana	Jhunjhunu dist.	–	Old workings
	Naori	Jhunjhunu dist.	–	Small old workings

	Ponk	Jhunjhunu dist.	–	Impressive old workings
	Satkui	Jhunjhunu dist.	–	Old shafts and open pits
	Goria	Jhunjhunu dist.	–	Narrow old shafts
	Dhanota	Jhunjhunu dist.	–	Impressive old workings
	Nangal	Jhunjhunu dist.	–	Shallow old pits
2.	*Nim-ka-Thana belt* Baleswar	Sikar dist.	Chalcopyrite Pyrite Pyrrhotite	Developed old workings Scattered slag, mine dumps, well-planned old mining colonies
3.	*Alwar–Jaipur belt* Baldeogarh	Alwar dist.	Chalcopyrite Pyrite	Old workings
	Nalladeswar	Alwar dist.	–	Old workings
	Kalajoda	Alwar dist.	Pyrite Pyrrhotite Chalcopyrite	Number of shafts with large slag dumps
	Pratapgarh	Alwar dist.		Old workings consisting of underground slopes, huge dumps of mine spoil
	Matasula	Alwar dist.		Old shafts
	Gol-Badshahpur	Jaipur dist.	Pyrite Pyrrhotite Chalcopyrite Bornite	Old workings (2 km) with mine dumps and slag heaps
4.	*Lalsot–Nithor–Khansera belt* Khankhera	Bharatpur dist.	Chalcopyrite Pyrite	Old workings
5.	*Jahazpur belt* Jhikri-Amargarh Block	–		Old workings
6.	*Western Copper Zone* Devpura–Banera Pur–Dariba		Chalcopyrite Pyrite	Two major old workings—Dariba main pit and parallel trench, with slag heaps
	Gurla	Bhilwara dist.		Old workings and some slag heaps
7.	*Jasma–Rewara–Karor belt* Rewara	Chittorgarh dist.	Chalcopyrite Pyrite	Shallow depressions, many of them narrow vertical shafts

8.	*Kalahudi–Bethumni Zone* Satdhudia	Bhilwara dist.		Series of old workings
9.	*Hari–Bhopalsagar–Akola Zone* Hari	Chittorgarh dist.	Chalcopyrite Pyrrhotite Pyrite	Chains of old workings with mine dumps and slag heaps (1.8 km)
	Akola (Dariba)	Near Akola vill.		Few old workings with small slag heaps and mine dumps
10.	*Banswara belt* Jharka	Banswara dist.	Chalcopyrite	Three zones of old workings, viz., eastern, western, and northern (1.47 km, 1.2 km, and 2.5 km respectively)
11.	*Delawara belt* Karoli	Udaipur dist.	Chalcopyrite	Extensive old workings including shafts (1.8 km)
12.	*Dungarpur Zone* Padar-ki-Pal	Dungarpur dist.	Pyrite Bornite Chalcopyrite	Old workings and slag heaps
	Amjhara	Dungarpur dist.	Chalcopyrite Bornite	Old pits with mine dumps
13.	Bikramsar Bidasar	Bikaner dist.		Old workings

remarks on the profitability of the mines were mentioned by Erskine—the first mine, in the opinion of Todd, did not repay the expense of working, while the second was almost exhausted after having been worked for nearly thirty years.

Unfortunately, although the copper reserves and old workings of Rajasthan have been known and exploited for a very long time, there is a great paucity of scientific dating. Regrettably, the available radiocarbon dates for Khetri are only medieval or modern (Possehl 1988: 184). Six copper ore mining and smelting sites were investigated by K.T.M. Hegde for lead isotope dating in the Aravallis (Hegde 1985: 160–9). He also reported the dating of timber supports from a gallery set at a depth of 120 metres at the Rajpura–Dariba mines in Udaipur district; the radiocarbon date is 3120 BP, that is, the last quarter of the second millennium BC (ibid.).

Protohistoric tradition: The early protohistoric copper smelting site of Ahar in the Banas basin of the Mewar plain which yielded heaps of slag-like material along with part of a furnace is significant, especially in the context of the recovery there of etched carnelian beads, an artefact clearly of Harappan provenance (Sankalia *et al.* 1955–6: 11). The Ganeshwar–Jodhpura complex which dominated north-east Rajasthan during the second millennium BC provides an impressive metallurgical repertoire and wide-scale evidence of copper smelting. Copper slag and/or evidence of copper smelting is present at the protohistoric sites of Gaonri, Gaonri Bandh, Kulra, Nimodh, Para Bhitar-ki-Dhani, Umrawala, Chinchroli, Banar, Oda-ki-Dhani, Aheerwala, Basedi, Bihar, Chamrauli, Delsar, Dhoonwala, Dilpura, Golyari, Khadra, Khalra, Kishore Para, Loharwas Sota, Mungter, Purana Kothuka, Pyopara Tigri, and Buchera (*Indian Archaeology* 1978–9: 20, and 1979–80: 62–5; Agrawala 1981: 60).

Lead

There are a large number of lead deposits in Rajasthan, many of which indicate the presence of old workings. The main areas where lead deposits are found are the Ajmer lead–zinc zone, the Jahazpur lead–zinc–copper belt, the Pur–Banera belt, the Zawar lead–zinc belt, the Dariba–Rajpura Bethumni lead–zinc belt, the Basantgarh–Deri belt, the Rampura–Agucha zone, the Jasma–Rewara–Karor belt, the Salampura–Kochriya area, the Banswara lead–zinc belt, along with some minor occurrences in Basantgarh (Raghunandan et al. 1981: 64–5).

Many of these belts also show evidence of early workings. One of the most famous of these mining sites is that of Zawar, on the banks of the Tiri river, which has been studied in some depth by the University of Baroda in collaboration with Hindustan Zinc Limited and the Research Laboratory of the British Museum, under the direction of Hegde (*Indian Archaeology* 1983–4: 77; also see Willies *et al.* 1984: 222–33). Old workings have also been noted at Ghugra (Ajmer district) and Chauthka–Barwara (Sawai Madhopur district) (Raghunandan *et al.* 1981: 113–14)

Gold

One of the earliest modern references to the presence of auriferous gold in Rajasthan is that of Erskine. He mentioned the presence of traces of gold noticed by a certain Major Hughes near Rohira in 1897 (Erskine 1909: 265).

In 1987, R.S. Jain recorded the incidence of gold in Rajasthan (Jain 1987: 99–103). This gold mineralization, which occurs in the greenstone belts in the rocks of the Mangalwar Complex and the Hindoli group, was identified in certain areas of the Jahazpur belt which were visited by him in January 1987. The specific areas are:

Bhilwara district: The areas of the Jahazpur belt which indicated gold mineralization are Devatalai and Amargarh. The core sample of quartz reef from Devatalai assayed 0.2 g Au/tonne while a surface grab sample from the same reef assayed 0.4 g Au/tonne. A grab sample of sheared quartz reef from the pit mouth of one of the old workings in Amargarh assayed 1.8 g Au/tonne.

Ajmer district: About 3 km east of Kharwa, south-east of a small village called Gwara, is a well which is reported to be an old working for gold. It was suggested that this area should be checked for gold.

Jhunjhunu district: In the Kolihan copper mine, Jhunjhunu district, ore shoots with high copper content were also found to contain a high percentage of gold (Raghunandan *et al.* 1981: 74). The percentage of recoverable gold based on the metallurgical tests performed on bulk samples are as shown in the chart of samples.

Sample No.	*Cu ((%)*	*Au (gm/tonne)*
A	7.61	1.53
B	–	3.0
C	2.73	0.4

Also, at Usri in Jhunjhunu district (rich in copper deposits), a large number of old workings in the south-western part were supposed to have been worked for gold (ibid.: 97) The mine spoil

consists mostly of quartz vein debris with occasional malachite stains.

Silver

That the galena of the Zawar mines in Udaipur is argentiferous is well known. B.C. Roy, for instance, noted the recovery of silver by cupellation from the lead concentrates by the Metal Corporation of India's smelters at Tundoo (Roy 1959: 276). Also, at the Kolihan copper mine (Central Block) in the Khetri belt, a percentage of silver was recovered from certain ore shoots by the Geological Survey of India; the percentage of the recoverable silver is given below (Raghunandan et al. 1981: 74–5).

Sample No.	*Cu ((%)*	*Au (gm/tonne)*
A	7.61	4.18
B	–	20.66
C	–	2.00

There are old workings for lead, silver, and zinc at Aguncha which have been dated to 990 BC (information received from D.K. Chakrabarti). Lead with 11 per cent silver per tonne has also been noted at Jodawas, Alwar (La Touche 1918: 304).

Feldspar

The presence of feldspar near Ajmer, Alwar, Dungarpur, and Jodhpur has been reported by B.C. Roy (1959: 142–4).

Lapis lazuli

The presence of lapis lazuli in the Nagpahar hills, three miles to the west of Ajmer, had been mentioned by R.H. Irvine, although this report was never confirmed subsequently (see Roy 1959: 161 and La Touche 1918: 175).

Protohistoric tradition: A lapis lazuli bead was found at the site of Ahar (Sankalia *et al.* 1969: 163).

Afghanistan and Central Asia

Lapis lazuli

Lapis lazuli is known to occur in significant quantities in the Kokcha valley south of Firgamu in Badakshan and in the western end of Lake Baikal in Siberia (Asthana 1982: 273).

Protohistoric tradition: At the Harappan site of Shortughai, situated 25 km from the Kokcha river in whose upper course the famous lapis lazuli mines of Badakshan are located, lapis lazuli beads, chunks, and fragments were found (Francfort 1984: 303).

Silver

Important silver mines exist at the head of the Panjshir valley in south-east Hindukush, in the vicinity of Herat (Asthana 1982: 276). La Touche noted that samples of lead ore from an ancient lead mine at Faranjal showed 1½ ounces of silver per tonne of lead (La Touche 1918: 291).

Gold

Gold is known to exist three miles to the north of Kandahar where mining was abandoned shortly before 1881—the contact zone where gold was found was traced to the south-west for a distance of about seven miles (Pascoe 1931: 674). E. Pascoe also noted the region to the north side of the Hindukush where small quantities occurred as also in the streams draining the Kuh-i-Baba, Kohistan, above Laghman and Kunar (ibid.)

China

Jade

S.C. Nott (1936: 1, 2, 13) has outlined jade occurrences in China: the dark green variety was obtained mainly from Barkul, Manas in Sungaria, the country surrounding Lake Baikal, and the mountain slopes of the western Yunnan; an emerald green variety could be obtained from Lan t'ien on the borders of the province of Shensi; jadeite occurs *in situ* in the Pamir region, the valley of the Tunga

which is a tributary on the left bank of the Raskem Darra; the nephrite variety of jade is known to occur in Khotan and Yarkand in eastern Turkestan, the jade mountains in Belurtag on the upper waters of the Tisnab river about eighty miles from Yarkand being possibly the most notable source of supply. Nott has also quoted the testimony of a Manchu author (Hsi Yu Wen Chien Liu, published in AD 1777) in this regard (ibid.: 1):

> There is a river in Yarkand in which are found Jade pebbles. The largest are as big as round fruit dishes, or square peck measures, the smallest are the size of a fist or chestnut and some of the boulders weigh more than five hundred pounds. There are many different colours, among which snow white, kingfisher green, beeswax yellow, Cinnabar red, and ink black, are all considered valuable.

Protohistoric tradition: It is well known that jade was exploited in China from the neolithic period onwards. The jade artefacts in what Alfred Salmony (1963: 15) calls the pre-Anyang period, that is, from the nebulous Hsia period (2205 BC) till 1200 BC, include neolithic axes from Siberia, and flat ring ornaments, knives, chisels, adzes, rings, beads, and segmented and whole slit discs from Kansu, Honan, and Shansi.

Gold

In 1983, H. Lansdell noted, among other occurrences, the presence of gold at twenty-two places in Khotan (Lansdell 1893).

Lines of Communication

Clearly, the internal resources available in the upper Indus plains, the North West Frontier highlands and lowlands, Rajasthan, and Sind were central to the city of Harappa. The point here is that although Harappa was located in a broad alluvial expanse, the range of raw materials that it exploited (with the exception of jade), were largely accessible either from conjoining regions, the Derajat being one such example; regions within the Harappan distribution area, such as Sind and Baluchistan; or even regions which, while being

geographically outside the larger hinterland of the Bari *doab*, displayed clear cultural contacts with the Indus civilization—Afghanistan and Rajasthan are two such areas. This outline of the procurement and distribution of different kinds of raw materials used at Harappa as also of cultural linkages and site distribution is suggestive of the significant lines of movement that articulated trade and contacts there.

Regions to the North of the Indus–Harappa

The communication axis in the region, stretching from the Bari *doab* right till the Hindukush and the Karakoram mountains, can be visualized along several lines. First, there were interconnections between the Bari *doab* and the Potwar plateau. Second, routes went across the Indus to the Derajat province, a core region, for providing access along a number of directions. Among other texts, the *Narrative of Various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan and the Punjab* of Charles Masson published in 1842 evocatively described the nature of traffic that traditionally passed through Derajat and the symbiosis of its traditional agricultural economy with elements of the *kafila* traffic coming from different, often far-flung, areas there (Masson 1842). In the period under discussion, Derajat seems to have mediated interaction between Baluchistan and Harappa on the one hand and the Bannu–Peshawar axis through which access was gained into Central Asia and Afghanistan on the other.

With reference to the first route, economically, the wide availability in the Salt Range and some intermediary hilly outliers, such as the Chiniot, Kirana, and Dhak escarpments, of steatite, gypsum, jasper, limestone, slate, granite, basalt, and haematite is of primary significance. Both the protohistoric and pre-modern traditions of exploitation in a number of the above-mentioned raw materials emphasize their possible exploitation by Harappa. At the same time, there is an absence of settlements with a mature urban Harappan phase in the Potwar plateau. In this context, the implications of several late radiocarbon dates from the sites of Sarai Khola, Jhang, and Hathial West in this region are suggestive of the survival

of the early Harappan (i.e., the Kot Dijian level) culture and, consequently, being contemporaneous with the urban Indus tradition (Thomas and Allchin 1986: 37–44).

The basic interaction must have been along two routes, both of which emanated from Jhang district. The main direction from Harappa to Jhang where the Kirana and Chiniot escarpments were readily accessible may have followed the trunk route that used to be taken by traffic coming from Delhi across Pak Pattan, crossing the Ravi to go to Jhang (*Imperial Gazetteer of India* 1908: 9). The Ravi, incidentally, used to be crossed by fourteen ferries. From Jhang district, after crossing the Chenab, the Jhelum could have been followed to the Potwar plateau; the Jhelum was a navigable river and Punjab salt used to be exported to Multan by it. Whether it was mediating traffic between Harappa and the Salt Range in this period is not certain since the intervening region has not revealed any Harappan sites; nevertheless, considering the ease of communication through this route between the two regions, it may have been in use in the protohistoric period. The second route could have gone along the Indus into the Derajat region where Harappan Gumla stood. A section of the Gomal plain, where Musakhel was flourishing in the early Harappan period, is located less than 10 km south of the Salt Range, and it is likely that this region provided access, albeit indirect, between the Potwar region and Harappa. The presence of a Harappan seal at Musakhel underlines this connection (Allchin 1984: 52).

Derajat district was significant in the pattern of routes lying to the north of Harappa partly because of its raw material resources such as crypto-crystalline semi-precious stones and different kinds of ordinary stones as well, which were found as *in situ* occurrences and in the form of water-worn pebbles in the Gomal and Takhwar rivers. These resources were also used in a broadly contemporary context in the region itself, most strikingly by Harappan Gumla. Additionally, the Derajat region provided access into north Baluchistan, where a Harappan presence is attested to, and which was also providing serpentine and lapis lazuli to Harappa. Theoretically, there are a large number of routes from north Baluchistan to the

Indus plains. James Dowie's (1916: 27) comments on the access through the Suleiman mountains make this reasonably clear:

> The drainage of the western slopes of the Suliman range finding no exit on that side has had to wear out ways for itself towards the plains between the foot of the hills and the Indus. This is the explanation of the large number of passes, about one hundred, which lead from the plains into the Suliman. The chief from north to south are the Vehoa, the Sangarh, the Khair, the Kaha, the Chachar, and the Siri, called from the torrents which flow through them to the plains. There is an easy route through the Chahchar to Baluchistan.

The presence of Harappan remains at Periano Ghundai, located in the Fort Sandeman area through which the Gomal defile is reached for access into the Derajat region, suggests however that the Gomal pass was among the important points of entry into Baluchistan (Mughal 1978: 141).

Through Derajat province an equally significant communication axis came to Harappa from the tangled mass of mountains and valley pockets of the Swat and Dir areas which provided access from Central Asia and Afghanistan. Culturally, the importance of this route stemmed from it being the main channel through which Harappa, along with contemporary Harappan sites in the neighbouring subregions, came to procure resources such as jade, lapis lazuli, silver, gold, and copper from Central Asia and Afghanistan. There are several archaeological elements that also suggest interaction along this axis. While no Harappan settlements have been found in the Bannu basin, through which this trade route lay, the continuance of the early Harappan settlements of Islam Chauki and Tarakai Qila implies the presence of a cultural pocket there which was contemporary with the mature Indus phenomenon (Thomas and Allchin 1986: 47–9). Higher north, while the protohistoric sequence of the North West Frontier highlands and lowlands remained aloof from the mature Indus tradition, the pottery of Ghaligai, an important contemporary settlement in the Swat valley, which was a fine, wheel-turned ware, pink to brick red, often decorated with black bands, has been related to that of

the Harappan civilization (Stacul 1984: 205–9). More significantly, the protohistoric sites of this region seem to have used many of the raw materials of Central Asian and Chinese provenance which were being transported from there to Harappa and other contemporary sites. For instance, gold, lapis lazuli, and jade artefacts are found at Bir-Kot Ghundai (Stacul 1980: 59–61); lapis lazuli and jade at Loebanr (ibid.: 68–72; Stacul 1979: 232–51; Antonini and Stacul 1972: 62–243); jade at Ghaligai (Stacul 1984: 205, 209 and Stacul 1979: 644–89); and gold at Kherari (ibid.: 662) As regards Harappan links with Afghanistan, the presence of the Harappan site of Shortughai off the Amu Darya is well known. Among the striking Harappan or Harappan-inspired artefacts there, one may mention painted and unpainted ceramics which 'all reproduce, carefully, their Harappan models', terracotta 'cakes', long tubular and etched carnelian beads, *Turbinella pyrum* bangles, Harappan graffiti on jar rims and beakers, and a square Harappan seal (Francfort 1984: 303). At Dashly 3, located to the north-west of Balkh, alabaster plates decorated with trefoils and a humped bull in an undoubtedly Harappan style, as well as two small kidney-shaped vases close to the equivalent Harappan examples have been noted (ibid.: 173). While no artefactual evidence for suggesting Harappan contacts with China is available, there are artifactual similarities with the cultural repertoire of the 'intermediary' region i.e., the Swat and its adjacent valleys. The significant artifactual elements of Chinese inspiration are the presence of stone shaft-holed harvesters, bone pins shaped like a t'ao t'ieh mask, and representations on the pottery of Bir-Kot Ghundai (Period IV) which are similar to those on the ceramics of the Yang Shao culture of north China (Stacul 1979: 671; Stacul 1981: 306–11; Stacul 1984: 210).

The distribution of neolithic and chalcolithic settlements and graveyard sites all over the hill-girt region north of the Indus and the interleaving of important lines of movement with this pattern, highlighted by most archaeological writings on the frontier region, suggests the links with Harappa from the Derajat area northwards. From Derajat the route went through the Bannu basin and Kohat to Peshawar—traditionally, a considerable quantity of salt went

by this route from Kohat (Enriquez 1921: 93). The following routes from the Swat valley to the Peshawar plain have been outlined by A.H. Dani (1967: 12): over the Malakand pass to Dargai; through the eastern end from Barikot, via the Karakar pass–Buner valley–Ambedla pass to the Sudama plain where Shahbazgarhi stands; and in between Malakand and Karakar where the Shahkot pass connects Chakdara, Thana, and Jamalgarhi via Sanghav and Katlang. The distribution of lapis lazuli artefacts in the protohistoric sites that occupied approximately the same chronological time bracket is also indicative of movement along this axis—Bir-Kot Ghundai, Gumla in the Gomal valley, and Harappa in the central Indus plains. Jade from Chinese Turkestan may also have followed broadly the same axis, since jade beads and pendants are found at the monumental centre of Harappa and at Bir-Kot Ghundai, Loebanr, and Ghaligai. It is also not simply coincidental that C.M. Enriquez (1921: 54), the author of an early work on the Pathan frontier, noted at a mound south of Bannu town 'pottery, beads, signets, and bits of polished jade and agate'. Since the major mounds of Bannu belong to the second millennium BC, it may be possible that these above-mentioned artefacts can be dated to the same phase.

From Swat, the Dir and Chitral regions, very much within the ambit of the neolithic–chalcolithic horizons of this period, were traversed to reach Yarkand, from where one route went up to Kashgar and the other down to Khotan. It is interesting that in spite of tremendous physical difficulties in the routes along this axis, active trade between these regions occurred even in the nineteenth century. For instance, E.F. Knight (1894: 306) noted active interaction between the Karakoram and the Indus valley: 'The Gilgit merchants obtained their goods from India through Chilas by the Indus Valley route, despite the heavy tolls they have to pay to the tribesmen, so far preferable is this way to the Gilgit road, with its high passes and dangers.'

There are several lines for mediating interaction with Russian Central Asia and Afghanistan through the Swat region. From Hunza and the Pamirs, Afghanistan and Central Asia could be

approached. This was an important route in the nineteenth century, as is evident from Knight's description of the goods found by the troops he accompanied to the Thum of Hunza's castle (ibid.: 477, 483–4). The goods from Russia included tooth powder, boxes of rouge, pots of pomades, cosmetics, a number of Russian prints, samovars, matches, and candles. Since in Harappan times Hunza had to be traversed to reach the jade resources of Chinese Turkestan, it is possible that it also mediated trade in raw materials from Russia. The pass that lay in Hunza was the Kilik pass that led across the extreme east of Afghan territory (Wakhan) into Russian Turkestan (Nevill 1977: 3).

Another route which must have been of some importance, especially for the exploitation of lapis lazuli, went north-west of Chitral through the Dorah pass, which led into Badakshan district of Afghanistan (ibid.: 4). There may have been a route via Kabul as well—north of the Khawak pass, above Kabul, the Khosh-Tapa hoard has yielded some specimens (nos. 7, 8, 13, 17) which are made in an Indian style or with Indian elements (Dupree *et al.* 1971: 33).

Sind Coast–Sind–Harappa

The postulate of a transregional axis from the Karachi coast, cutting across the Sind plains towards the Bari *doab*, probably going beyond towards the northern highlands, can be validated on the basis of several kinds of data. First, Sind with its large monumental Harappan centres—Mohenjodaro, Chanhudaro, and Juderijodaro being the most well-known examples—was one of the core zones within the spatial spread of the Indus civilization and it is likely that it intermeshed through trade and other cultural contacts with urban centres of similar magnitude in contiguous zones such as the central Indus plains' city of Harappa. Second, at Harappa, small-scale shell working was undertaken, for which the raw material was being procured from the Sind coastline. Finished artefacts in marine shells and coral have also been recovered at Harappa in significant quantities. Third, artefacts in shell and coral have been found at

contemporary sites in Derajat (Dani 1970–1: 86), the Swat (Stacul 1980: 59–61, 68–72; Stacul 1977: 232–51; Antonini and Stacul 1972: 62–243; Stacul 1984: 205, 209; Stacul 1979: 644–89) and Dir regions, and Shortughai (Frankfort 1984); the likelihood of Harappa mediating this traffic in artefacts of marine origin is strong since the route or routes towards the north went through the Bari *doab*. Fourth, certain raw materials from the Sind region, such as crypto-crystalline semi-precious stones and flint, were being procured by Harappa; in fact, flint blades were reaching the site from the Rohri hills. The presence of artefacts of these raw materials in the Sind plains from the pre-Harappan period itelf is also significant. Finally, although the exact significance of maritime trade *vis-à-vis* the external contacts of the Indus civilization is controversial, that some seaborne trade was taking place is a certainty. Some Mesopotamian-inspired artefacts at Harappa, as for example the lapis lazuli inlay pendant and a cylinder seal, may well have travelled along this route to reach Harappa (Vats 1940: 35, 441).

There were several routes connecting the coast through the lower Indus plain with Harappa. The Indus river would have been, as it became since then, an important channel of communication. E.H. Aitken, in 1907, in his discussion on the trade of Sind admitted that 'before there were any railways in India, a river like the Indus seemed to give to the Province that possessed it an advantage which defied competition' (Aitken 1909: 38). However, he pointed out certain major obstacles in this, such as the fact that the navigation of its mouths was dangerous and also that its currents were so strong that the passage of boats going upstream was extremely slow. In this regard we may also mention the observations of Alexander F. Baillie (1890: 39) who noted that whereas the riverine route (in which, of course, camels carried goods for a brief span from Gharra to Jerruck where they were again embarked on the Indus) took twenty-one and a half days at a cost of Rs 52, by the direct road to Sehwan the journey by camels took twelve days at a cost of Rs 7 per camel. There were several overland routes connecting southern Sind with the northern regions. An old trade route went north from Karachi to Thano Bula Khan and entered

Larkana district, north of the Laki range. This route was undoubtedly significant in this period considering the cluster of sites all along it from the Karachi district where there was a concentration of sites around Allahdino, Amri, Ghazi Shah, Ali Murad, Lohumjodaro, and Mohenjodaro. That the route went up to the Sukkur-Rohri hills, an important source of flint for Harappa, is also undoubted. In fact, in the early twentieth century, the normal trunk road from the Karachi coast entered Sukkur district from both the right and the left banks of the Indus river and then continued to Multan, in which area Harappa was located (Smyth 1919: 20–1).

It is unlikely that any significant routes followed the eastern bank of the Indus river to Harappa, in the light of the paucity of sites there. At the same time, though there are hardly any sites in the lower eastern Sind region, higher up, Chanhudaro (Mackay 1943: 231–3), Kot Diji (Khan 1965: 21), and Naru-Waro Dharo (*Pakistan Archaeology* 1964: 44) do show evidence of coastal and interregional contact. Possibly, the Indus was crossed around these points by ferries, ferry crossings being numerous even in the early part of the twentieth century. In the Nawabshah (Smyth 1920a: 14), Hyderabad (Smyth 1920b: 17), Sukkur (Smyth 1919a: 22), and Larkana (Smyth 1919b: 22) districts, among others, there were ferries at regular intervals on the Indus river which were controlled by the local boards; the receipts were evenly divided between the two districts which were connected by the ferry. Sometimes, even within one district ferries were established at a number of points. For instance, in Sukkur district, the district gazetteer mentions the existence of ferry crossings at Rohri, Pano Akil, Ghotki, and Ubauro talukas (ibid.: 23). In fact, Chanhudaro, in the Nawabshah district, seems to have been an important point along which trade from Sind to Punjab and further north was mediated. This is evident from the large number of raw materials exploited at the site, and from the large number of specialized manufacturing activities conducted there which, incidentally, covered a larger absolute area at the site than even at Mohenjodaro. From Chanhudaro the route probably followed the banks of the Indus till it reached the Bahawalpur tract, after crossing which Harappa was reached.

Rajasthan–Harappa

The routes along this line seem to have articulated a relationship of special privilege on account of Rajasthan's enormous mineral resources, especially copper. In fact, contentions about the importance of the communication nexus between Harappa and Rajasthan have centred primarily on the direct and indirect exploitation of the vast copper resources of the latter region; the limited metallurgical analysis that has been done on the Khetri copper deposits clearly suggests that Rajasthan copper was being exploited by the monumental centres of the Indus civilization (Agrawal 1984: 166). Along with copper, some silver, possibly gold and lead as well, and semi-precious stones from Rajasthan were also being procured by Harappa. The Ganeshwar–Jodhpura complex in the Khetri region which included within its ambit a large number of specialized protohistoric copper smelting sites is also significant. In fact, an examination of many of the illustrations of arrowheads of the barbed variety, spearheads, and fish hooks shows a number of general stylistic affinities between Ganeshwar copper objects and those from Harappa. It is also extremely significant that Harappan pottery has been found at Padiya Pajyali in Sikar district and at Chava Siri in Jhunjhunu district, both of which form the heart of the Ganeshwar–Jodhpura cultural zone (*Indian Archaeology* 1980–1: 56 and 1981–2: 62). Also, the presence at Sabania, Bikaner, of two copper celts inscribed with the Indus script is decidedly suggestive of the presence of Harappan contacts (Agrawala and Kumar 1982: 131).

Mughal's field research in the Cholistan desert tract of the Bahawalpur region suggests that the main route of communication between the Indus plains and the regions to the east including Rajasthan was through this strip itself (Mughal 1982: 85–96). The Hakra river, according to Mughal, was perennial in the fourth–third millennium BC; the presence of over 172 sites with mature Harappan occupation levels on a stretch of the now dry bed of the river suggests its importance. On the Indian side, at least 28 Harappan sites have been discovered in the Hanumangarh–Ganganagar

area, most of them clustered along the dry bed of the Ghaggar river (Joshi *et al.* 1984: 522). Equally significant is the fact that 45.4 per cent of the sites in the Cholistan tract have been typified as 'industrial' sites (Mughal 1982: 92). Many of these industrial sites seem to have been involved in copper smelting, for instance, Siddhanwala Ther, near Fort Derawar, yielded not only a copper ingot but also numerous kilns (ibid.).

This region, then, definitely acted as a conduit to the Rajputana copper belts. The major routes connecting the Indus plains and Rajasthan through Bahawalpur have been delineated in the Rajasthan district gazetteers (Agrawal 1978; Sehgal 1972a and 1972b) and by G.L. Devra (1980: 36–45). The Bikaner area, the copper resources of which had been almost exhausted by the twentieth century, was providing some copper in the protohistoric period, especially in the light of its general geographical orientation to the Cholistan tract. Bikaner was connected by two major routes to the Bahawalpur region and Multan. The first was the Multan–Bahawalpur–Anupgarh–Mahajan–Lunkaransar–Bikaner route. The second route was from Multan through Pugal to Bikaner. That Pugal mediated traffic between the Ganeshwar–Jodhpura culture and Harappa is suggested by the discovery of fragments of copper arrowheads along with some microliths there (Agrawala and Kumar 1982: 131).

Agrawala, on the basis of the landsat imagery of former rivers in this region, suggested the possible route connecting Sikar and Jhunjhunu districts, the core areas of the Ganeshwar-Jodhpura culture, and the Indus civilization sites to the west, which include Harappa (Agrawala 1984: 160–1).

> Ganeshwar, as a site is ideally situated on the source of one of the streams of the river Kantli which is further fed by other streams from Kanwat–Thei-Khandela, all located in the copper zone of the Shekhawati region . . . The river Kantli seems to have been a major river during the pre-Harappan period. Flowing east of Jhunjhunu town, it now dries up near Rajgarh in the Churu district, whereas, in the past, it joined the Drishadvati river somewhere between Nohar and Bhadra in the north, from where there was no difficulty in moving towards

> Kalibangan which is hardly 50 km . . . The Kantli river is, at some places, 2 to 3 km in width and it must have made possible movement from Ganeshwar to Kalibangan and other Indus centres of the west.

It is possible that a land route from Ganeshwar to the Sothi–Bhadra region via Nim-ka-Thana, Khetri, Chirawa, and Rajgarh was also in use in the Harappan period, as Agrawala suggests (Agrawala and Kumar 1982: 129). From the Sothi–Bhadra region, the Ghaggar–Hakra tract was followed to go west.

Conclusion

What does the foregoing analysis of the nature of resource use, resource access, and lines of communication of the urban centre of Harappa imply for studies of Harappan trade?

To begin with, if the primary focus of studies of Harappan trade has been on its external ramifications, the present essay demonstrates that the extant geological and archaeological data provide the space on which the internal resources available to the civilization can be mapped to exemplify the importance of the internal pattern of trade and trade routes. This analysis of the possible zones from where Harappa was procuring the range of raw materials that it exploited, and the possible trade routes with reference to these zones is a specific case in point. Although a comprehensive analysis of the overall pattern of the trade routes of the Harappan civilization has been attempted elsewhere (Lahiri 1990), this essay has sought to highlight the abundance of raw materials available to Harappa within the distribution zone of the civilization itself or along its peripheries. This aspect has been also highlighted by Mercia Fentress (1976). Clearly, the importance attached by South Asian archaeologists to the regions west of Baluchistan—whether it is the rich sources of copper in Oman or the presence of carnelian in the Persian Gulf—is misplaced. While there may have been raw materials involved in the long-distance trade between the Indus valley, the Persian Gulf, Iran, and Mesopotamia, there is no reason to argue that Harappa or any other sites of the Indus civilization

were in any way solely or even significantly dependent on the regions to the west for such raw materials.

This essay has also tried to emphasize the point that Harappa, like other contemporary monumental centres of the period such as Mohenjodaro, Chanhudaro, Lothal, etc., was a centre where specialized manufacture was undertaken—for instance, manufacture of steatite seals and jewellery, alabaster inlay work, shell working, semi-precious beads, weights in agate, sandstone, slate and chert, flint and chert artefact manufacture, and copper/bronze working. In some categories, evidence for manufacture is undoubtedly more extensive than in others.

Another implication of this analysis is that the theoretical constructs used to understand the position of Harappa have failed to take into account these aspects of the site. This is reasonably clear from even a cursory overview of one of the models for understanding the locational significance of Harappa, namely, the notion of the 'gateway city' explored by Shereen Ratnagar (1982: 261–4) as also by Fentress (1982: 245–60). The major points in that argument may be summarized as follows. One, a gateway city is 'part of a settlement system characterised not by centrality and the interstitial placing of sites, but by dendritic networks where lower level centers are tributary to only one higher level . . . With primate cities functioning as "gateways" the networks connecting the settlement points are like elongated fans radiating from the primate city' (Ratnagar 1982: 263). Fentress's (1982: 250) analysis is also similar: 'What one actually does find is a dendritic type of pattern which follows the rivers, without much settlement in between. There is evidence of some contact with different cultures in the highlands and resource areas . . . Harappa is best viewed in the Indus urban network as the main northern supply center to Mohenjodaro.' Two, such settlement points are linked to the gateway city, rather than to each other except along routes. Three, this settlement pattern is especially to be found in regions where the economy has a strong external orientation. Harappa, according to Ratnagar, seems to have had precisely such an orientation. Finally, the absence of, in Ratnagar's opinion, archaeological data on local manufacture

at the site strengthens the possibility of Harappa having functioned as a gateway city.

A rereading of *Excavations at Harappa* and other relevant data, however, puts a question mark on the 'gateway theory' as a model for analysing Harappa's role in the Indus civilization because it fails to take into account many of the basic points at issue. First, the possible areas delineated in the essay from where Harappa was procuring its raw materials demonstrates that this urban centre cannot be meaningfully visualized within a framework of one primate city and several tributary centres. For instance, if the Derajat and Potwar regions were providing gypsum, jasper, chalcedony, agate, limestone, copper, lead, and gold, among other resources, to Harappa, the presence of contemporary settlements which have well-established pre-Harappan antecedents in the Gomal plain and in the Potwar plateau and which do not seem to owe their existence to Harappa's needs for such raw materials has to be considered. In fact, the 'consensus calibration' of radiocarbon dates from the late Kot Dijian sites in the Bannu basin, Gomal region, and the Potwar plateau suggests that the early Harappan horizon in those regions continued into the Harappan phase (Thomas and Allchin 1986)

This permits the inference that Harappa was procuring these raw materials from regions that were clearly not part of the Harappan distribution zone. The Kot Dijian horizon seems to have still been the dominant culture in the regions north of Harappa; the description of 'tributary centres' for such sites is, thus, not possible. It also needs to be underlined that most of the Kot Dijian sites of the Bannu, Gomal, and Potwar regions used many of these raw materials (that Harappa needed). Similarly, the sites of the Ganeshwar–Jodhpura culture of north Rajasthan which were flourishing in the zone from where Harappa procured copper cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be subsumed within the postulate of tributary centres. Furthermore, if the 'natural' hinterland of Harappa, according to Fentress, included northern Rajasthan, the complex hierarchy of Harappan settlements there and in the adjoining Hakra stretch suggests that the notion of a dendritic settlement pattern in which the lower-level centres were tributary

to only one higher-level centre, that is, Harappa cannot be sustained. The Ghaggar–Hakra stretch includes some of the largest Harappan sites including Lurewala, Trekoe, Kudwala, and Derawar (Chakrabarti 1979: 207) In fact, Lurewala which was 820,000 square metres in size is almost as spectacular in its spatial dimensions as Harappa which covered 850,000 square metres. The former Hakra river bed where such sites are concentrated is only separated from Harappa by about 150–200 km.

Also, while Harappa's 'greater hinterland of unique and diverse essential raw materials' (Fentress 1982) was clearly significant in the broader perspective of the resource procurement system of the Indus civilization, the foregoing analysis of the resources available to Mohenjodaro raises questions about the theoretical proposition that Harappa transported these resources to it. Given the constraints of space, a detailed elucidation of the contact zone of Mohenjodaro is not possible. However, in Sind itself, ordinary stones, including flint/chert, semi-precious stones, shell, and gypsum, were available. Many of the resources that were not available in Sind but were used at Mohenjodaro could have been obtained from Baluchistan, ranging from essential metals like copper to 'luxury' minerals such as turquoise and lapis lazuli. The other raw materials available in Baluchistan, also used at Mohenjodaro, were lead, agate, jasper, serpentine, steatite, haematite, and silajit. This communication axis had been foreshadowed in the centuries prior to the efflorescence of the Harappan civilization not only by the presence of some Baluchi raw materials in Sind but also by the occurrence of Baluchi pottery there, as well as by the presence of Sind pottery in Baluchistan. Moreover, Baluchistan is marked by a definite Harappan presence, including sites like Dabar Kot, Sutkagendor, etc. Of course, Baluchistan was not the only region with which Mohenjodaro was interacting in the mature Harappan phase, and it is most likely that Rajasthan was also providing raw materials including copper, agate, jasper, steatite, lead, gold, silver, nepheline, and feldspar. The monumental centre of Harappa could not possibly, keeping the geography of the area in mind, have played any role in articulating Mohenjodaro's procurement of raw materials from either Baluchistan or Rajasthan. There were, nonetheless,

some raw materials that may have been supplied from the northern regions such as jade, gold, silver, and lapis lazuli. However, most of these were 'luxury' items and not 'essential' raw materials.

Further, while none of the resources that Harappa exploited were located in the immediate vicinity, the presence of most of these resources in regions which were often not at great distances from the Bari *doab* and, in most cases, were available in regions that displayed contacts with the Harappan civilization, weakens the argument that Harappa had a primarily external trade orientation.

Finally, the notion of a gateway is causally linked to the secondary postulate of the lack of evidence of manufacturing activities at Harappa. However, the evidence is not as sparse as it is made out to be. Possibly, this is due to the lack of attention that such usages of theoretical models display for specific contexts in which socio-economic phenomena like trade and trade routes need to be studied, contexts which can be visualized in the case of Harappa even through a cursory reading of the basic excavation report.

In fact, it is being increasingly acknowledged that the use by archaeologists of controlled and conscious abstractions of spatial patterns, such as, 'gateway' or 'central place' theories, developed by geographers needs to be considerably refined if useful information on past social relationships that apparently lie coded in them is to be extracted. For instance, while geographers have regarded central places basically as economic phenomena in which non-economic factors figure only marginally, settlement archaeology has demonstrated that such complex settlement patterns in the field record are found to be spatially identical, whether they were performing economic, or military and administrative functions in relation to their hinterlands (Clarke 1968: Figs 113–15; Adams 1974: 239–58; Renfrew 1977: 71–90). The notion of a 'gateway city' also is an aspect of the mercantilist model in which the development of an urban system is built on the articulation of long-distance trade. The representation of Harappa as a gateway city is significantly dependent on the postulation of an external trade orientation and a lack of local specialized manufacture for it, which, as has been demonstrated here, is clearly untenable. It may

possibly be more useful to think of the role of the city of Harappa and its location in the context of multiple processes in which socio-political and economic factors were at work. That exercise, however, is beyond the scope of the present essay.

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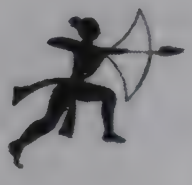
7

South Asian Demographic Archaeology and Harappan Population Estimates



Introduction

THE POPULATION HISTORY OF ANCIENT SOUTH ASIA, theoretically speaking, has a number of dimensions to it. These range from a description and analysis of the demographic characteristics of population groups in various chronological and geographical contexts to understanding the ways in which these characteristics are related to cultural and environmental factors. In fact, discussions relating to the population of ancient India have substantially remained at the level of impressionistic generalizations with very little empirical support. This may in part be due to the nature of the source material which does not lend itself easily to the exercise of generating estimates. Literary sources which, regrettably, still provide the main scaffolding to the image of ancient India are inadequate for the purpose of reconstructing demographic history, while archaeological data useful for

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estimating population have rarely been collected with a view to advancing knowledge relating to this issue. However, since most sources of population history (even for the modern period) have built-in sources of error, the necessity of generating basic data on population in different regions and cultural settings in early India need not be shelved till the time that absolutely reliable evidence becomes available.

This essay reviews the methods that have been used for estimating the population sizes of cities and other settlements of the Harappan civilization (*c.* 2700–1700 BC). It begins by briefly discussing how the study of human population in archaeological contexts has been practised in India. Apart from highlighting some relevant archaeological dimensions of South Asian skeletal populations, this should also serve the purpose of demonstrating that the primary method for assessing the demographic parameters of Harappan cities is substantially the same as what has been more generally used in archaeological studies of other early Indian settlements. In this, ethnographic analogies, derived from data on medieval and modern towns and villages, are used to work out appropriate estimates for archaeological sites. It is my argument that this approach has, on the one hand, ignored the variability of the historical and ethnographic sources and, on the other, has paid inadequate attention to the peculiar characteristics of the archaeological record itself. Finally, the essay suggests an alternative approach for converting archaeological data on settlement space into population figures.

Trends in South Asian Demographic Archaeology

Generally, archaeological studies on ancient population groups in early India have depended on the palaeodemographic approach which primarily studies 'populations' of skeletal remains. Such studies have been focused around a well-defined range of sites which have yielded dental, cranial, and other skeletal elements. A 1984 catalogue mentioned 63 sites from where the relevant skeletal evidence had been published and 108 others with unpublished remains, and these numbers have been steadily increasing in recent

years (Kennedy and Caldwell 1984: 29–57). One need not go into the details of the sites or the data which come from almost all post-palaeolithic contexts, ranging from the mesolithic and going well into the historical period. A 1994 review of dental anthropology, for instance, lists over twenty-five settlements which have provided usable data on the relationship between diet and dental pathology and include mesolithic sites in Sri Lanka (Batadomba Lena, Beli Lena) and India (Sarai Nahar Rai, Bhimbetka, Bagor, Mahadaha), neolithic villages in Kashmir and peninsular India (Burzahom, Ieej, Balijapalle), iron-using sites in Pakistan (Timargarha, Sarai Khola), and megalithic contexts in Vidarbha and Andhra Pradesh (Mahurjhari, Raipur, Borgaon, Khairwada, Kanyathirthum) (Walimbe and Kulkarni 1994: 205–16).

At the same time, issues that are considered to be central to demographic history such as mortality, fertility, nutrition, and disease, and which can be profitably studied through skeletal evidence, have remained underworked. This has been so because of an unfortunate preoccupation among both physical anthropologists and archaeologists with racial palaeontology, that is, assigning skeletal populations to racial taxonomies. It is possible to cite a large number of earlier studies including those of B.S. Guha and Sasanka Sekhar Sarkar (see Chakrabarti 1997: 133–46), but what is more serious is that this remains a current concern in Indian archaeology. Pratap Dutta's work (1983) in which a biometrical treatment of 260 skeletons from Harappa was attempted for the purpose of 'evaluating numerically the morphological affinity, or otherwise, between it and various other relevant contemporary population groups' (ibid.: 101) so as to argue that they were physically 'Indian', 'occupying an anthropologically distinctive status' (ibid.: 134), is an example of such an approach. Another publication in the same vein is that of B. Hemphill and J.R. Lukacs (1993: 101–20) where 196 skeletons from the American excavations at the Harappan cemetery of R37 are discussed. Here, among other things, genetic shifts are said to accompany the introduction of Dravidian languages in South Asia! Notwithstanding the enormous literature that has demonstrated the problems as also the implications of correlating race with, or constructing ethnicity from,

archaeological data, the tendency to correlate biology with the origin and development of historical processes, ranging from technology to language, remains very much alive.

There have been detailed critiques of racial history including a trenchant assessment of the interplay of race, language, and culture in Indological studies in a monograph, *Colonial Indology* (Chakrabarti 1997; see also Trautmann 1997). As has been pointed out in that monograph, even in biological anthropology, not all scholars have found racial conclusions regarding ancient Indian skeletal material convincing. D.K. Sen, for instance, in his presidential address to the anthropology and archaeology sections of the Indian Science Congress in 1964–5 argued that such works used ideal racial types, conveniently ignoring the variabilities in measurements and characteristics (cited in Chakrabarti 1997: 145–6):

> . . . almost all anthropologists working on the Indian material have been having these 'archetypes' before their mind, with the result that each skull has been taken singly and compared with one of the hypothetical racial types. If the comparison shows a closeness to a type, the skull has been regarded as belonging to that particular race. If on the other hand, the resemblance is less exact, the skull has been relegated to a mixed group. It may very often happen that a single skull shows features that belong to two or more hypothetical types; in such cases, the skull has been immediately considered to have been the result of a mixture of these races. Sometimes, the most likely 'racial types' have been considered in the skulls from a particular area, so that the conclusions generally could confirm a conventional story of invasion or migration put forward in history. Since the individual variability in physical characteristics is very great, it has not been difficult to find the type suitable in a particular situation from a collection of skeletal material.

Similarly, the writings of K.A.R. Kennedy, a palaeoanthropologist, have consistently highlighted the fallacy of seeking pure races in the ancient South Asian past since skeletal remains of earlier populations show a degree of biological heterogeneity which appears to be as broad as that discernible today (1976: 166–78; see also Kennedy and Caldwell 1984). If South Asian palaeodemography no longer appears as a mere inventory of racial traits, it is

partly due to the work of this scholar who pioneered the science of 'osteobiography' (i.e., extracting information of life histories from bones) in South Asian archaeology. Whether it is hunter-gatherer cultures or situations marked by agricultural intensification, subsistence strategies are known to create a biological impact. This can be assessed from human bones which always carry the chemical traces or what are called 'signatures' of different foods that were consumed. Kennedy's publications have also demonstrated that changes in skeletal morphology could be more meaningfully understood non-genetically, as resulting from the differential functional demand placed on the body in the changed lifestyles of specialized hunting-gathering and early farming societies. For instance, several skeletons from Sarai Nahar Rai, a hunter-gatherer settlement in the Ganga valley, were shown to have hyperdevelopment in the attachments of particular arm muscles (aconious and supinator muscles at the proximal ends of ulnae) because of habitual stress related to activities such as spear throwing, use of the slingshot, etc. (ibid.: 38).

A major area of interest in the Department of Archaeology at the Deccan College, Pune, has been the reconstruction of the composition, diet and, longevity of population groups in the Deccan, especially those from chalcolithic and megalithic sites. The descriptive catalogue of skeletal material from chalcolithic Inamgaon, which contains data from 243 burials that were excavated by the Deccan College team, is among the most detailed publications on the physical anthropology of skeletons from a single archaeological site in India; in addition to the morphological characteristics of crania, bones, and teeth, their pathological anomalies are also outlined (Lukacs and Walimbe 1986). More recently, S.R. Walimbe and Aletha Tavares have attempted to infer a few general trends from such data (1995: 525–9). Their figures regarding the age-wise and sex-wise distribution of Deccan chalcolithic groups suggest a 56.96 per cent infant mortality rate, an average life expectancy of around 25 years, and a maximum lifespan of 35 years. Incidentally, in a contiguous area, the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, the skeletal series from later iron-bearing megalithic contexts did not contain any individual above 32 years of age

(Mohanty and Walimbe 1993: 99) and was marked by a very high young adult (17 to 31 years) mortality rate—32.73 per cent of the available sample. Additionally, the dietary intake of many of these groups has been related to their pathological and osteological abnormalities. Apparently, the most prevalent lesion found in the pre-adult segment of the Deccan chalcolithic groups was superficial porotic hyperostosis (Walimbe and Alvares 1995). This is linked to inadequate vitamin C and is more common among groups that consume mainly cooked food as boiling destroys ascorbic acid. Hunter-gatherers, on the other hand, have much fewer stress markers on bones and teeth that are diagnostic of fluctuations of nutritional resources (Kennedy and Caldwell 1984). At the same time, instances of dental attrition and interproximal grooves (a notch worn into the tooth cervix) are much higher (Lukacs and Pal 1992: 45–55). The latter feature is generally attributed to activities such as preparing sinew for bowstrings, hafting points, or even habitual toothpicking.

The other area of demographic investigation in South Asian archaeology, also the theme of this essay, involves an estimation of population size, density, and growth rate in various phases and contexts. The number of people that occupied a settlement or a region can be archaeologically determined in a number of ways that are qualitatively different from those that are employed in such periods and instances where census data and compilations like that of Abul Fazl are available. The methods devised for this purpose range from an analysis of settlement details and food refuse to burials and ethnohistorical data (Hasan 1981). As far as South Asian sites are concerned, generally available estimates have computed population size from archaeological settlement data understood in the light of relevant ethnohistorical evidence. This approach is based on the presumption that there is a relationship between settlement space and population. Several aspects of a settlement can be used for estimating population—volume of site deposits, lifespan of the settlement, compacted volume of house materials, and covered area of residential units. In Indian archaeology, however, population has been generally estimated by focusing on the size of the habitational mound or archaeological settlement

in relation to a fixed number of persons and/or houses per site hectare. This number, incidentally, is determined from a village or town that is considered as being comparable to the archaeological settlement under consideration.

Makkhan Lal's assessment of the protohistoric and early historic population in the Kanpur district, for instance, was done in this way (1984: 211–37). Using data on Uttar Pradesh villages, he computed a per hectare density for the archaeological sites of Kanpur. Since the average size of the household in Uttar Pradesh for 50 years (1911–61) was 4.9 persons per house while the total number of houses in an average village was 55 per hectare, he arrived at an estimate of 271 persons per hectare for the sites in that area in the second and first millennia BC.

Based on these calculations, Lal argued that the total population of Kanpur district was 4,646 persons in the Black and Red Ware period of occupation (roughly second half of the second millennium BC) which increased to 14,509 in the Painted Grey Ware phase (roughly 900 BC onwards). During the subsequent North Black Polished Ware phase (*c.* 600 BC onwards), this increased to 37,909 persons to finally reach a figure of 79,077 persons in the early historic period (second century BC till third century AD) (ibid.: 212–14). Effectively, this means that there was a fivefold increase in the population of the Kanpur area in a period of about a thousand years (from the beginning till the end of the first millennium BC) (ibid.: 230). Theoretically, this should be possible keeping in mind the rate of demographic growth in some areas, for instance, in Bengal, the population over just about seventy years (1790–2 to 1860–2) from 33,149,000 to 65,605,000 (Guha 1996). Moreover, during the first millennium BC there was a marked expansion in the arable land and in the number of settlements as also a major phase of urban growth that coincided with the establishment of several kingdoms/states in the *doab* and Gangetic plains, among other areas. In another study, that of Allahabad district, which was the heartland of the kingdom of Vatsa, a broadly similar demographic phenomenon was observed (Erdosy 1988). Here, in Period I (1004–600 BC), the population was apparently 7,160, increasing

to 20,100 in Period II (600–350 BC) and 62,502 in Period III (350–100 BC). One may, however, point out that this study (like that of Lal) was based on a surface survey of sites, many of which were multicultural. In field explorations of multicultural sites, while it is possible to calculate the size of the mound or site with a degree of precision, estimates of the increase and decrease in settlement size, phase-wise and period-wise, are unlikely to be very accurate. Consequently, one needs to treat such population figures with caution. Just as demographers, while using census figures, modify the stated estimates depending upon whether the census was roughly or well organized, in archaeological estimates as well, it is imperative to arrive at a methodology by which population figures are calibrated, depending on the nature of the survey and the character of the sites.

Population estimates for chalcolithic sites in the Deccan are also available. These have suggested a more modest working estimate than that of Lal for Kanpur, of around 200 persons per hectare (Dhavalikar, *et al.* 1988: 1001; Dhavalikar and Possehl 1974: 40). However, unlike Lal's study which was based on an analogy from the same geographical area, in this instance the authors depended on the figures worked out by R.M. Adams (1965) for Mesopotamia from modern data on the old quarters of Baghdad (216 persons per hectare) and other Middle Eastern towns and villages in the Susiana plain and Kur basin. This Middle Eastern index is also the one that has been accepted in *The Archaeology of Early Historic South Asia* for estimating the populations of such widely dispersed settlements as Hastinapura in the Ganga–Yamuna *doab* to Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka (Coningham 1995: 58). What these writings seem to have ignored are the more recent studies of the Near East (Hassan 1981) which have demonstrated that the average population density of rural settlements in Southwest Asia was well below 200 persons per hectare and was likely to have been between 119.6 and 54 per hectare depending upon the degree of nucleation within the settlements. Moreover, practically speaking, it may have been more useful to search for suitable analogies from ethnographic contexts within the subcontinent. The substantial literature

on pre-modern towns and cities in India, some of which will be discussed later in the essay, shows a wide variation in the population density of urban centres from area to area and within one region as well. At the very least, this variation emphasizes the futility of using a fixed general figure for estimating population from archaeological remains in South Asia.

Reassessing Previous Estimates of Harappan Settlements

The Harappan urban phenomenon was the result of a sequence of interrelated social and economic processes going back to 4000 BC or even earlier. These need not be explored in the present context. What does appear to be striking and relevant, however, is that this phase coincided with a major demographic event—the emergence of large urban centres—as also a rapid expansion of agricultural, semi-nomadic, and craft settlements in various parts of Sind, Bahawalpur, Punjab, Haryana, and Gujarat. While earlier, Mohenjodaro and Harappa stood out as the only large cities (with estimated populations of between 33,000 and 41,000 each), today we know of eight more settlements of similar dimensions. These are fairly spread out—in Bhatinda district of Punjab, Hissar area of Haryana, the Cholistan tract of Bahawalpur, and Kutch in Gujarat—and symbolize the creation of aggregates of population on a scale that was unknown in the antecedent phase. Clearly, the inhabitants of such cities and several smaller ones were supported by a broad-based and stable agriculture, supported by animal husbandry and hunting. We know of several cultivated crops, though those in and around the Indus system (wheat, barley, chickpeas, flax, lentils, and perhaps mustard) were different from the crops that were grown in the Gujarat area (rice, millet, and legumes). One may point out, however, that new crop types appearing in excavations show the presence of rice and millet at the city of Harappa itself (Fujiwara *et al.* 1992: 129–42).

In fact, it has been argued that the agricultural potential of the Indus flood plain was first harnessed in this phase (Chakrabarti 1995: 49–50) and possibly explains why the settlement area

more than doubled. According to M.R. Mughal's calculations, the 19 sites whose sizes are known covered 68.94 hectares in the pre-Harappan phase as compared to 172.07 hectares (number of sites is 22; Mughal takes 83 hectares as the area of Mohenjodaro) in the Harappan period (Mughal 1990: 92). The settlement expansion was much more striking in the Cholistan tract of Bahawalpur, a core area of the civilization (ibid.). The site estimates of 73 of the 174 settlements show a covered area of 447.68 hectares as compared to 40 early Harappan sites, 32 of which covered 210.01 hectares. In this area, it may also be broadly accurate to speak of a general de-ruralization of the countryside since 79 (or 45.48 per cent) of the settlements were classified as being of an industrial/craft character, while 33 sites (18.96 per cent) combined residential and craft activities (ibid.). Settlement expansion is evident in other parts of the distribution zone of the Harappan civilization and, clearly, this progressive, sometimes even exponential, increase was a function of increasing population size.

What this increase means in terms of numbers has not been worked out in any depth but is necessary for an accurate characterization of the demographic conditions in the Harappan phase. What has, however, been discussed is the issue of determining the population sizes of specific Harappan settlements, and it is to these estimates that we now turn.

The first study of Harappan population was made by a statistician, Jatindra Mohan Datta, in 1962,[1] who depended on the granary sizes at Harappa (covered area: 12,000 sq. ft or 1,114.8 sq. m with a height of 35 ft or 10.6 m) and Mohenjodaro (covered area: 11,260 sq. ft or 1,046 sq. m with a height of 25 ft or 7.6 m) (Datta 1962: 6–12). Datta's assumption was that the grain stored in these units would be sufficient for a year's consumption needs of its citizens which, taking an annual rate of dietary intake per head, could then be converted into reliable population figures. So, calculating the total volume of milled grain (250,000 cu.ft or 7,079.2 cu.m for Harappa and 225,200 cu.ft or 6,377 cu.m for Mohenjodaro) and its weight (0.7 maunds per cu.ft for wheat) in these granaries, which was divided by the annual rate of dietary intake per person, Datta arrived at a total population

figure of 37,155 for Harappa and 33,469 for Mohenjodaro. According to Datta, since Harappa covered an area of 480 acres (194.2 hectares) and Mohenjodaro was spread over 640 acres (259 hectares), a density of 74 persons per acre for the former and 52 persons per acre for the latter was likely.

Datta's estimate of Mohenjodaro's spatial dimensions even in 1962 was incorrect; John Marshall had suggested an area of roughly 240–50 acres (97–101 hectares) and, more recently, Michael Jansen put the visible urban space of the city at 247 acres (100 hectares) (1989: 177).[2] Consequently, Datta's figure for that city would have to be revised to 133 persons per acre. More significantly, one of the assumptions on which this approach is based, that is, of a central storage facility for the civic consumption of the city's populace, seems to be erroneous. There is no evidence of a centralized body exercising control over the agricultural produce and its supply. It is entirely possible that the stocks in the granaries were not meant for the local citizens alone but were transported to other settlements. The location of the granary at Harappa, on the riverside, also suggests this. But the major reason why this approach has had such a limited applicability relates perhaps to the paucity of similar grain storage facilities even in provincial centres like Kalibangan in Rajasthan, Banawali in Haryana, or Dholavira in Gujarat. Clearly, even if it was possible to arrive at a more precise correlation for calculating the city population from granary sizes, computations could only be made for very few settlements.

The second approach, outlined by H.T. Lambrick in 1964, is an overwhelmingly ethnohistorical one and has been more influential. In this, the populations of the third millennium BC cities (Mohenjodaro and Harappa) were computed by using nineteenth-century data on the trading city of Shikarpur in Sind. Lambrick (1964: 71) considered Mohenjodaro as being very similar to the Shikarpur that was described by T. Postans:

> Postans tells us that its walls made a circuit of nearly three miles: that the large covered bazar was half a mile long; and that it contained 22,000 inhabitants according to an 'accurate census' taken by himself

> in 1840–41. He proceeds to describe the characteristics of the interior of a Sindhi city; we may note particularly that the dwellings are 'upper roomed', the apartments ill-ventilated, the passages between the houses narrow, scarcely admitting a laden camel.

The figure mentioned by Postans as the population of Shikarpur—22,000 inhabitants—according to Lambrick, required an upward revision, since the former's enumeration possibly did not touch the 'harem' area, to 30,000 inhabitants. Lambrick also pointed out that Harappa and Mohenjodaro had similar circuits and that the latter was known to have houses of two storeys which were densely distributed within the city area. However, for some reason which remained unstated, he felt that more people lived within the three-mile circumference of Mohenjodaro than at Shikarpur, and allotted to the former, as also Harappa, a population of 35,000 each. Based on these figures, the density at these Harappan cities would have been approximately 76 persons per acre calculated in the following way:

City population	35,000	
	or	= roughly 76 persons per acre
Covered area	458.1841 acres	

This covered area would roughly be the acreage of a settlement with a three-mile circumference.

On the face of it, a density of 76 persons per acre or roughly 188 persons per hectare seems reasonable enough. But, what was overlooked by Lambrick and other scholars who have subsequently used this index was that Shikarpur as described by Postans, with its narrow, confined, and dirty streets, with no building of importance except one mosque, qualitatively differed from the architectural sophistication of the deliberately planned city of Mohenjodaro (Marshall 1931; see also Jansen 1989).[3] Among the more important differences was the fact that, unlike the citizens of the third millennium BC, a large portion of the population calculated as belonging

to Shikarpur resided outside the city walls (Postans 1841: 18). Postans also seems to have given conflicting estimates for the population and circumference of Shikarpur. For instance, in 1841, he mentioned the following figures from the census that he had conducted: Hindus at 18,913, Muslims at 8,647, and 1,000 Afghans and Pathans (ibid.). From these, it would seem that Shikarpur's population was 28,560 persons, which is substantially larger than the 22,000 inhabitants mentioned elsewhere, on which Lambrick apparently based his calculations. Similarly, at one place Postans mentioned the circumference of the city walls to be 3,831 yards (ibid.) (this would mean a length of 2.17 miles) while Lambrick worked with a figure of nearly three miles, again given by Postans. Since the spatial extent and the population of nineteenth-century Shikarpur are in dispute, it can hardly be regarded as an appropriate example for estimating the populations of Harappan cities.

Unfortunately, the empirical data on which Lambrick depended were never carefully scrutinized and came to be used for calculating the density of all types of Harappan settlements. This can be seen in Chakrabarti's study on the population sizes of Harappan sites (1979: 205–15). The merit of that study was that, for the first time, estimates for as many as 35 Harappan settlements of all kinds, ranging from a couple of acres to over 100 acres, located in all parts of the distribution zone of the civilization were offered, but this was done on the basis of Lambrick's correlation between site area and population. What makes Chakrabarti's figures inaccurate is that he was under the impression that Lambrick's estimate of 35,000 as the population of Mohenjodaro was based on a figure of 850,000 sq. m or about 210 acres as the city area, whereas the latter had clearly mentioned that the second–third millennium BC cities, like Shikarpur, had a three-mile circumference. This circumference would enclose roughly 458 acres or 185 hectares. So, whereas Lambrick worked with a figure of 76 persons per acre, Chakrabarti's estimate was more than double, at over 160 persons per acre. If modifications are made, according to Lambrick's figures, Chakrabarti's estimate of 15 Harappan settlements with a population of more than 5,000 must be scaled down. In any case, since

Lambrick chose an ethnographic example which was qualitatively different to Mohenjodaro, it is necessary to discard his figures and all estimates that have depended on the correlation worked out by him.

In estimating population by analogy, even when more satisfactory data are employed than what Lambrick cited, one should use a fixed estimator such as 200 persons or 120 persons per site hectare as a blanket index with caution for two reasons. First, the area of the site or mound, that is, the accumulated remains of ancient nucleated settlements, can significantly differ from the inhabited segment within it. An example in point is Harappan Surkotada in Kutch where the length (160 m) and width (125 m) of the mound suggests an area of 20,000 sq. m (Joshi 1990: 15). However, excavations there have revealed that the citadel and lower residential complex, both containing living units, measured only 60 x 60 m and 60 x 55 m respectively, or an area of only 6,900 sq. m (ibid.: 26). Obviously, an estimate of Surkotada's population on the basis of its mound size is likely to be unreliable. The same is true for the town of Kalibangan. Its overall perimeter, made up of three mounds (KLB-1, KLB-2, KLB-3), is said to be 1.5 to 2 km (Lal 1979: 65). A 1.5 km circumference would mean a reasonably large area. However, if we look at the sizes of the habitational zones within this, they are appreciably less. KLB-3 was an exclusively ritual complex, possibly post-dating the mature Harappan phase. KLB-1, on which the citadel complex lay, measured 240 x 120 m and KLB-2, the locale of the lower township, covered an area of 240 m x 360 m (Lal 1984: 56–60). Without taking KLB-3 into account, this would mean an area of 115,200 sq. m or roughly 28.4 acres. In other words, the inhabited area of Kalibangan was visibly smaller than the area covered by the mounds. The residential area would be even less—the southern rhomb of the citadel mound contained large mud-brick platforms with a series of fire altars, with residential houses only in the northern section. Similarly, Kuntasi, a small 2-hectare Harappan port town on the boundary between Kutch and Saurashtra, was surrounded by a double fortification. A substantial uninhabited space, which varies from 1 m to 1.5 m in width, separated the two fortification walls, and a

population index that does not take this into consideration would be far too high (Dhavalikar 1992: 78, Fig. 10.4). The same holds true for Dholavira in Kutch. The debris of the main fortified city there covers roughly 128.5 acres (800 m east–west and 650 m north–south) (Bisht 1989–90: 72). However, the citadel measures around 11.8 acres (300 x 160 m), the 'Middle town' 22.2 acres (360 x 250 m) and the dimensions of the lower town work out to about 22 acres as well (300 x 300 m). There are also large open spaces between the citadel area and the 'Middle town', and around them. For estimating the population size of Dholavira, then, it would hardly be useful to offer an estimate on the basis of the spatial extent of the settlement debris of the main city.

Second, since most archaeological estimates have depended on analogies derived from documentary sources, the great deal of variability in such estimates needs to be considered as well. One can compare, for instance, the seventeenth-century estimates of Agra and Shahjahanabad, both of which were capital cities and in broadly the same geographical zone. As far as Agra is concerned, I have depended on Hameeda Khatoon Naqvi's work (1968: 17–18) who has taken the *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*'s description of the city area and the seventeenth-century traveller F.S. Manrique's population estimate of it to be reliable. The habitable areas of the city were spread on both sides of the Yamuna river and, on the basis of *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*'s description, seem to have covered 29 sq. miles on the western side and 4.16 sq. miles towards the east (ibid.). This would be about 21,222 acres which, if Manrique's estimate of about 700,000 citizens is reliable, would mean a density of 33 persons per acre. This was much lower than the population density of Shahjahanabad later in the century. Stephen Blake's study mentions that Shahjahanabad was surrounded by a 3.8 mile long stone wall and that within this walled area there were 250,000–300,000 persons (1991: 31, 67). His calculation, that the area inside the fortification was 1,500 acres, however, is incorrect since the circumference of such fortifications would work out to a rough figure of 735 acres. Taking 735 acres as the enclosed area of the city, the density per acre would have been 340 persons. This,

incidentally, is much higher than what was encountered in Amritsar in the middle of the nineteenth century. Amritsar, like Shahjahanabad, had a large walled segment of 840 acres of land (Gauba 1988: 142) in which the per acre density was 145.3 which went up to 183.6 by 1901 and only reached a figure of 351.4 in 1941. Similarly, if one looks at some of the details relating to the nineteenth-century fortified Gujarat town of Kheda, the roughly 100 acres, enclosed in the 7,425 ft circumference of the settlement walls, contained a population of 12,000 (Briggs 1849: 193–4). This gives a figure of about 120 persons per acre. Many more examples can be cited to support my argument, but the more general point, hopefully, has been made. Obviously, if one was to search for a workable modern index from the geographical zone that coincides with the distribution area of the Harappan civilization so as to estimate the population of an ancient fortified settlement, there would be a wide spectrum to choose from. This variety is interesting and important but does not get conveniently collapsed into a reliable ethno-archaeological framework.

Finally, a detailed comment on the Harappan population estimates suggested by Walter A. Fairservis, Jr. These estimates were offered in a paper entitled 'The Origin, Character and Decline of an Early Civilization' (Fairservis, Jr. 1979: 66–89) which has been widely cited although none of the writings that have used these estimates have reflected on its problems and pitfalls.

First, about the method. Here, it is necessary to distinguish between what Fairservis proposed to do and the actual basis of his estimates. He believed that the population of a Harappan settlement could be computed by (*i*) calculating the covered area of house plans visible in the excavated portions; (*ii*) using this as a ratio for estimating the numbers of houses in the rest of the site; and (*iii*) computing its population by a comparison with the number of people living in similar village houses in contemporary contexts (ibid.: 83). This is an approach that was pioneered in the context of Mesopotamia by H. Frankfort but has been applied in many other situations (Hassan 1981: 66). In the case of the Indus civilization, this is also a feasible approach because there are enough

details relating to a range of settlements, their physical layouts, and house types.

In fact, Fairservis's paper made no attempt to detail, site by site, the types of Harappan houses whose plans are known and the number of persons that could have inhabited them, on the basis of ethnographic analogies. On the contrary, Fairservis simply worked with an average figure of six people per house in the Harappan context which, in turn, was based on the figures published in 1962 by the Government of Pakistan. The details of those figures, incidentally, were not cited by him. Second, while it has often been argued that Fairservis suggested an area of 800 sq. ft per individual, and indeed this is mentioned in the text of the paper, a closer reading shows this to be a misprint (Dhavalikar and Possehl 1974: 40). He, in fact, used an estimate of 800 sq. ft as the average size of a house, inhabited by six persons at all sites with the exception of Kechi Beg and Mohenjodaro. This would be evident from the figures in Table 7.1.

Anyone with a working knowledge of the excavation reports relating to Harappan settlements would be able to point out that the suggested average house area is by no stretch of the imagination as tidy as that.[4] In the case of Mohenjodaro, for instance, as will be discussed in the next section, during the Intermediate phase, an average of 111.3 sq. m or 1,197.58 sq. ft per house/unit is the figure that the excavated house plans suggest.

There are two further problems in the computations shown in Table 7.1. If one examines the area of each city in relation to the number of persons suggested by Fairservis, the per acre density for several settlements including Kot Diji, Amri, Mohenjodaro, Harappa, and Ghazi Shah seems to be in the vicinity of 327 persons per acre, and in the case of Kechi Beg, it is higher. (I have arrived at these figures by dividing the sq. ft site area mentioned by Fairservis by the sq. ft area of an acre.) Considering that there were hardly any cities with such thick population concentrations even at the turn of the twentieth century in India, Fairservis's calculations have to be viewed with scepticism. Finally—and this is the reason why the estimates suggested are inordinately high—the population

Table 7.1

Population Sizes of Select Sites as Mentioned by Walter Fairservis, Jr.

Site	*Sq. ft*	*Total no. of houses and covered area per unit*	*Estimated population*
Kechi Beg	25,200	35 720 sq. ft	210
Damh Sadaat	160,000	181 883.9 sq. ft	1,086
Mohenjodaro	5,500,000	10,428 527.4 sq. ft	41,250
Ghazi Shah	236,250	295 800.8 sq. ft	1,770
Amri	810,000	1,012.5 800 sq. ft	6,075
Kot Diji	240,000	300 800 sq. ft	1,800
Lohumjodaro	540,000	675 800 sq. ft	4,050
Pir Lal Chatto	199,500	249 801.2sq. ft	1,494
Pandi Wahi	147,500	184 801.6 sq. ft	1,104
Chauro	150,000	187.5 800 sq. ft	1,125
Chanhu-daro	7,00,000	875 800 sq. ft	4,950
Judeir-jo-daro	2,700,000	3,375 800 sq. ft	20,240
Harappa (total exclusive of Citadel)	3,139,200	3,924 800 sq. ft	23,544

(*contd.*)

Table 7.1 (*contd.*)

Malir 2	226,800	283.5 800 sq. ft	1,701
Nal Bazar	151,875	190 799.3 sq. ft	1,140
Amilano	113,850	142 801.7 sq. ft	852

Source: W. Fairservis, Jr. 1979. 'The Origin, Character and Decline of the Indus Valley Civilization', in G. Possehl (ed.), *Ancient Cities of the Indus*. New Delhi, Oxford & IBH and American Institute of Indian Studies, p. 83.

estimates were based on the total site area. In other words, the space within the perimeters of a site was treated by Fairservis as entirely residential without making any allowances for non-residential buildings, roads, or open areas. Since the pitfalls of this approach have already been mentioned above, they need not be repeated here. It is enough to reiterate that a settlement is made up of different functional areas and structures, several of which are non-residential. Because of this, a city like Bombay in 1931 had an average density of 75 persons per acre, even though there were sections such as Umerkhedi and Mandvi where the density was as high as 413 and 223 respectively (Sorley 1933: 7–10). Similarly, urban and rural settlements of the Indus civilization were mosaics of residential and non-residential zones; while some zones in a settlement may have had a very high density, there were others that were more sparsely inhabited. However, since Fairservis did not take this into consideration, he arrived at figures that have to be considered as being wholly unrealistic.

Calculating Population through Habitation Space/Residential Dwellings

Instead of postulating a fixed mathematical relationship between area and population, a more reliable method of estimating population size demands an archaeological assessment of the Harappan settlements themselves. This can be done by working out (*i*) an

area estimate of the residential sector; (*ii*) details of houses, however limited, with a broad figure of number of persons per unit; (*iii*) an application of the figure arrived at, from the houses, to the residential area as a whole.

Following this method, one may try to estimate the population size of Lothal, where information relating to houses, phase-wise (spanning chronologically the mature urban Harappan phase and its devolution) and area-wise within the urban centre, is available in S.R. Rao's excavation report (1979). Here, the relevant data from Phase II, when the layout of the town was firmly established, will be examined.

The ovoid mound of Lothal is said to measure 934 ft or 284.6 m (north–south) and 749 ft or 228.2 m (east–west); this is an area of roughly 16.05 acres or 6.5 hectares (ibid.: 20). However, if we were to assess the spatial extent of the settlement, on the basis of the mud-brick wall surrounding it on three sides, with a wharf on the eastern margin, the inhabited section of the town would be smaller, around 14.9 acres or 6 hectares (Rao 1979: Plate XXXVIII).[5]

How much of this area may be assumed to be residential? This cannot be very precisely stated, but for estimating this it is necessary to first ascertain the non-residential areas of the town. These would certainly include: (*i*) the peripheral walls on three sides, whose width is stated to be 42 ft (ibid.: 135), which seem to have covered an area of 2.12 acres (0.86 hectares);[6] (*ii*) the wharf adjoining the dockyard, which, with a width varying between 64 and 72 ft (an average of 68 ft or 20.7 m) and a length of 800 ft (243.8 m) covered 54,400 sq. ft (5,046.6 sq. m) (ibid.: 126) or 1.24 acres (0.5 hectares); (*iii*) Block 'C' or the warehouse in the acropolis area. Here, the podium on which it was constructed, measuring 160 ft (48.7 m) x 135 ft (41.1 m), covered 21,600 sq. ft (2,006.7 sq. m) or 0.49 acres (0.02 hectares) (ibid.: 111); (*iv*) the interspace between the platform on which the warehouse was constructed and the peripheral wall, varying in width from 16 ft to 28 ft (ibid.: 136) (average of 22 ft or 6.7 m) with a length of 115 ft (35.05 m) (ibid.: Plate XXXVIII). This was rammed with *kankar* and covered an area of 2,530 sq. ft or 235 sq. m. There are

other zones which were possibly non-residential as well. For instance, adjacent to the warehouse is Block 'D', a mud-brick platform likely to have been functionally related to the former but due to heavy erosion its purpose cannot be ascertained (ibid.: 87). In the absence of positive evidence, it would be judicious to regard it as commercial-cum-residential. This would also be the case with Block 'A' which forms the bazaar part of the 'Lower town' (ibid.: 88). In these localities it is best to take roughly half of the covered area as being of a residential nature.

Leaving these for the moment, if the unambiguous non-residential sectors are taken as a whole, these would seem to cover an area of roughly 171,116.76 sq. ft or 3.92 acres (1.58 hectares). Expressed as a percentage of what I have taken as the inhabited town area (14.9 acres), this would mean that the clearly demarcated 'public spaces' were 26.3 per cent of the area of Lothal. If the non-residential segment of the commercial-cum-residential sectors is taken into consideration, which can be considered as covering half of the total covered area of such zones (64,340 sq. ft/5,977.3 sq. m or 1.4 acres/0.59 hectares), this would go up to 36.2 per cent of the fortified township.[7]

One may now take up those areas that were primarily residential which, as the above figures would show, at best covered around 9.58 acres (64.3 per cent) of the settlement. There were several such areas including Block 'B' in the acropolis, Block 'E' extending beyond the western arm of the acropolis, and Block 'F', standing north of Street 8. Houses in Lothal, unlike those at cities like Mohenjodaro and Banawali, were not two-storeyed.

Next, considering that in addition to houses, each of the above-mentioned zones contained streets, lanes, and elements of drainage and sewage systems, it is necessary to ascertain the actual area covered by residences in the various blocks. Satisfactory structural details are available only in the case of Block 'B' of the acropolis. So, a ratio is offered for that area (Rao 1979: Plate LVII), which may then be applied to the residential segment of Lothal as a whole. Here, the rectangular area which dominated Block 'B' is examined leaving out the five small houses on the south–east margin (Rao 1979: Plate LVIII).

The houses, 23 of them, in this segment of Block 'B' seem to have covered 10,738 sq. ft (997.59 sq. m).[8] The spatial dimensions of the area itself, criss-crossed by several streets and lanes, covered 20,874.78 sq. ft (1,939.3 sq. m). This is the covered area of only the actual block made up of the houses, streets, lanes, etc. and not the mud-brick platform or the houses to the north. In other words, in a primarily residential block, the houses covered about 51.4 per cent of the total covered area. Thus, of the 9.58 acres of Lothal that were primarily residential, houses stood in roughly 4.9 acres.

Finally, the number of houses and an average figure of persons per house must be suggested. If the 23 house units in 10,738 sq. ft (997.59 sq. m) of Block 'B' are taken as an index, with an average area of 466.8 sq. ft (43.37 sq. m) per house, this would mean 457.2 houses in Lothal. As for the probable number of persons per house, this can only be assessed by relying on ethnographic data. Of course, one of the practical problems in arriving at a figure derived from South Asian ethnohistorical contexts is that the sizes of houses in the relevant literature are hardly ever stated. The figures also vary from area to area. In the case of western India, in Mandvi town around the mid-nineteenth century, there were 40,000 people in 8,000 to 9,000 houses, roughly 4.4 to 5 persons per house (Campbell 1880: 237). On the other hand, in Kheda fort, 4,700 houses were inhabited by 12,000 persons, that is, 2.55 persons per house (Briggs 1849: 193–4). In the case of Kutch as well, in 1872, there were 99,790 persons (20.47 per cent of the population) in 37,785 houses or 2.64 persons per house and 387,515 persons (79.52 per cent) in 128,593 houses or 2.99 persons per house (Campbell 1880: 100). Considering the size of the average house of Lothal as also the above-mentioned figures for Mandvi and Kheda, a figure of roughly 3 persons per house may be used. This would mean that Lothal's population in Phase II was in the vicinity of 1,372 persons; for the site as a whole this would mean a density of 83 persons per acre (205 persons per hectare), while if only the inhabited segment is considered, this would rise to 92 persons per acre (227 persons per hectare).

Similarly, using this method, an estimate of the size of Mohenjo-daro may be offered, where a detailed study of different house

units has been attempted by Sarcina (1979). If the information provided by her on the extent of the residential sector of the 'Lower town' is accurate, it would seem that there is a substantial difference in the built-up area and that used for habitation. Of the 56,000 sq. m that were excavated, 20 per cent consisted of open spaces and streets. Of the remaining area available for investigation, that is, 44,800 sq. m, the architecture of only 36,000 sq. m could be interpreted in which roughly 77.7 per cent or 28,000 sq. m had a residential function. Considering that the citadel mound, not included in Sarcina's study, contained mainly, though not exclusively, public/communal non-residential buildings and facilities, there is a distinct possibility that the ratio of the residential area of Mohenjodaro in relation to the town area was even less than what Sarcina's figures suggest. The details regarding the house models for one of the structural phases there—the Intermediate period—are briefly summarized here. The total covered area of the 36 houses is 4,009.95 sq. m, which gives us an average of 111.3 sq. m area for each unit. This would mean approximately 36.35 houses per acre, and if an average of 5 persons per house is used, the density per acre would be around 181.75 persons.[9] Since it seems that only half of the 100 hectares (247 acres) contained house units, this would give us a figure of about 22,447 persons for the city. The average population density at Mohenjodaro may then be revised to a figure of about 90 persons per acre (222 persons per hectare).

In the case of Mohenjodaro, we are fortunate in so far as details relating to structural remains and house sizes are available. In those instances, more common in Harappan studies, where there is evidence regarding only a few houses and rooms, an estimate based on those details, keeping in mind the size of the residential sector, will have to be made. Similarly, hut sizes at settlements like Kanewal and Zekhada can provide an index to population size. Here also, the residential area will depend on whether the relevant settlement is a sedentary, an agricultural one or a camp of animal breeders. Finally, there are a large number of unexcavated Harappan settlements, located in surface surveys where only the dimensions of the mound are available. Population estimates at such

sites are bound to be highly provisional, but even so, instead of estimating its human size on the basis of the mound area, a more realistic method would keep in mind the nature of the concerned settlement as also the general ratio of the residential segment to the mound size from excavated sites in that area.

Conclusion

The foregoing reassessment of extant Harappan demographic estimates in particular and studies that have used ethnohistorical sources for assessing the sizes of archaeological populations in general has attempted to show that while ethnographic data have generally been regarded as an aid in interpreting population sizes, they can also be used as a caution. The variability in settlement populations and areas can be so wide that one would hesitate to use an average figure drawn from such evidence in archaeological contexts. Instead, our primary focus should shift to the archaeological record itself. It is likely that detailed site-wise analysis will yield more reliable estimates than approaches which impose blanket indexes from ethnographic parallels of the Middle East or the subcontinent on archaeological remains without adequate scrutiny.

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Notes

1. Datta, in the same year, also published his analysis of the population of India around 320 BC. Here, Datta based his estimate on the size of Chandragupta Maurya's army, mentioned in literary sources, and the number of families that would have been required to support it as also the salaries of army personnel, the number of horses that would be required, the working life of a horse, fodder requirements, etc. This, in his opinion, worked out to about 143 million people in the empire of

Chandragupta (Datta 1962: 277–92). However, since this did not cover many parts of the Indian subcontinent, the total population of India would have been much higher, in the vicinity of 181 million. This, if correct, would mean a larger population than even at the time of Akbar when, apparently, the figure for the subcontinent was about 144 million.

2. Jansen (1989: 177) maintains that while the present site covers an area of at least 100 hectares, there are structural remains extending at least one mile further east beyond the present site. Additionally, he mentions that the excavation programme in 1931 unearthed a densely built-up urban area more than 1,00,000 sq. m, amounting to 'one tenth of the total suspected area of Mohenjo-daro'. This would also give us an area of 100 hectares or 247 acres.
3. Among other things, the western segment of the city formed part of a clearly demarcated citadel area. This was constructed on a gigantic artificial platform measuring approximately 400 m by 200 m and attaining a final height of 7 m after being enlarged twice. Using this platform as a foundation, further platforms were built on top in order to elevate structures of special significance such as the granary and the Great Bath. So, the highest raised buildings must have stood more than 20 m above the surrounding plain (for details on the structural character of the city, see Marshall 1931; also Jansen 1989). A reading of the works of Marshall and Jansen reveals that the third millennium BC city does not even remotely match up to the description given by Postans of nineteenth-century Shikarpur.
4. A house in the Harappan context, has been defined in a number of ways. Jansen (1989) and Sarcina (1979) have argued that this may be done by mainly studying the position of the courtyard in relation to other rooms. S.R. Rao (1979: 102), on the other hand, suggested that a house could be reconstructed on the basis of the presence of baths. In the case of Block 'B' at Lothal, for instance, there are twelve structures, each made up of three rooms and a bath; these have been taken by him to represent separate houses.
5. This is desirable because on the western periphery is a cemetery area while the dockyard dominates the eastern margin. The calculations here, incidentally, are based on the site plan (ibid.: Plate XXXVIII), from outside the peripheral walls and wharf.
6. The calculations for the peripheral wall are as follows:
   West: 288 m x 12.8 m = 3,686.4 sq. m
   North: 208 m x 12.8 m = 2,662.4 sq. m
   South: 176 m x 12.8 m = 2,252.8 sq. m
   This gives a covered area of 8,601.6 sq. m or 2.12 acres.

7. These would include Block 'D' covering 7,680 sq. ft or 713.4 sq. m; Block 'A', the bazaar part of the 'Lower' town with shops and houses, covering 1,21,000 sq. ft or 11,241.2 sq. m (see ibid.: 88, 115).
8. The house details for Block 'B' are as follows: *Street 2*: seven houses, with a total area of 3,339 sq. ft (dimensions given in report); Street 3: four houses, to the north, in an area of 1,260 sq. ft (dimensions calculated on the basis of Plate LVIII, since they are not given in the report); *Lane 3*: nos. 17, 18, 19, which form one house, covering 624 sq. ft (where the dimensions have been calculated on the basis of the Plan of Block 'B', Plate LVIII; otherwise, dimensions are as stated in the text of the report), and two more houses (nos. 21 and 108) covering 432 and 540 sq. ft each (dimensions on the basis of above-mentioned plate); Street 4: three houses to the north—House 24 covering 500 sq. ft, House 57 covering 1,156 sq. ft, one more house covering 380 sq. ft (dimensions of the last house on the basis of site plan)—and three houses to the south, covering 1,562 sq. ft on the whole (dimensions on the basis of site plan); *Lane 2*: three houses, roughly 945 sq. ft (this is only a rough calculation since the outlines of these are not evident in the site plan nor are the dimensions mentioned in the report).
9. It is likely that Mohenjodaro would have had a higher number of persons per house than Lothal because many of the houses are double-storeyed. One would, however, not work with a higher figure because, first, we need to consider the fact that some units at Mohenjodaro which appear to be residential on plan are not actually so. Second, this figure fits in well even with densely populated cities like Amritsar, where the average number of persons per house fluctuated between 4.2 and 5.9 persons per house between 1881 and 1921, with the number of houses per acre varying from 31.36 to 45.29 (Gauba:1988).

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8

Indian Metal Artefacts and their Cultural Meanings

Introduction

IN THEIR STUDY OF BLOOMERY IRON SMELTING IN AMERICA and Africa, Gordon and Killick (1993: 243) underscore the necessity of recognizing that, while technology is always practised in accordance with the principles of physics and chemistry and the natural resources available, 'there is usually sufficient latitude within these constraints for a given technique to be carried out in quite different ways to meet the *goals of the practitioners in different cultures*' (emphasis added). My attempt will be to explain this with reference to metal technology in India, where the ideological underpinnings of metalcraft and the perceptions of metalcraftspersons provide the context and justification for understanding some of their practices. The points that this essay proposes to emphasize are the following. One, the persistent and numerically dominant tradition of working in copper of high purity that one observes in the early Indian archaeological record does not have any technological implication; on the contrary, it

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fits in with what we know about the ritual importance of pure copper in ancient Indian texts. The continuity of this tradition and the position of superiority of craftspersons in pure copper to those dealing with various alloys in the caste hierarchy is underlined in the more recent ethnographic background of metal-related craft traditions. Two, the variation in the elemental compositions of Indian metal artefacts also does not have any technological dimension. This must be understood in relation to a very dominant and ethnographically well-documented tradition of recycling objects and scraps of old metal. As some textual and archaeological sources indicate, this tradition goes back to the ancient period as well. Three, in some cases, metal or metal-related objects are focused around specific historical events and folk beliefs; the stories/myths and artefacts are linked to each other in ways which suggest that in such contexts the latter can only be understood in a symbolic sense—as signifiers of social and cultural beliefs.

On the whole, one would argue that the history of the use of metals in the Indian archaeological record is much more than a catalogue of artefact types and their technological make-up: it also denotes a cultural situation which seems to be very specifically Indian.

The Tradition of Working in Pure Copper

Archaeology

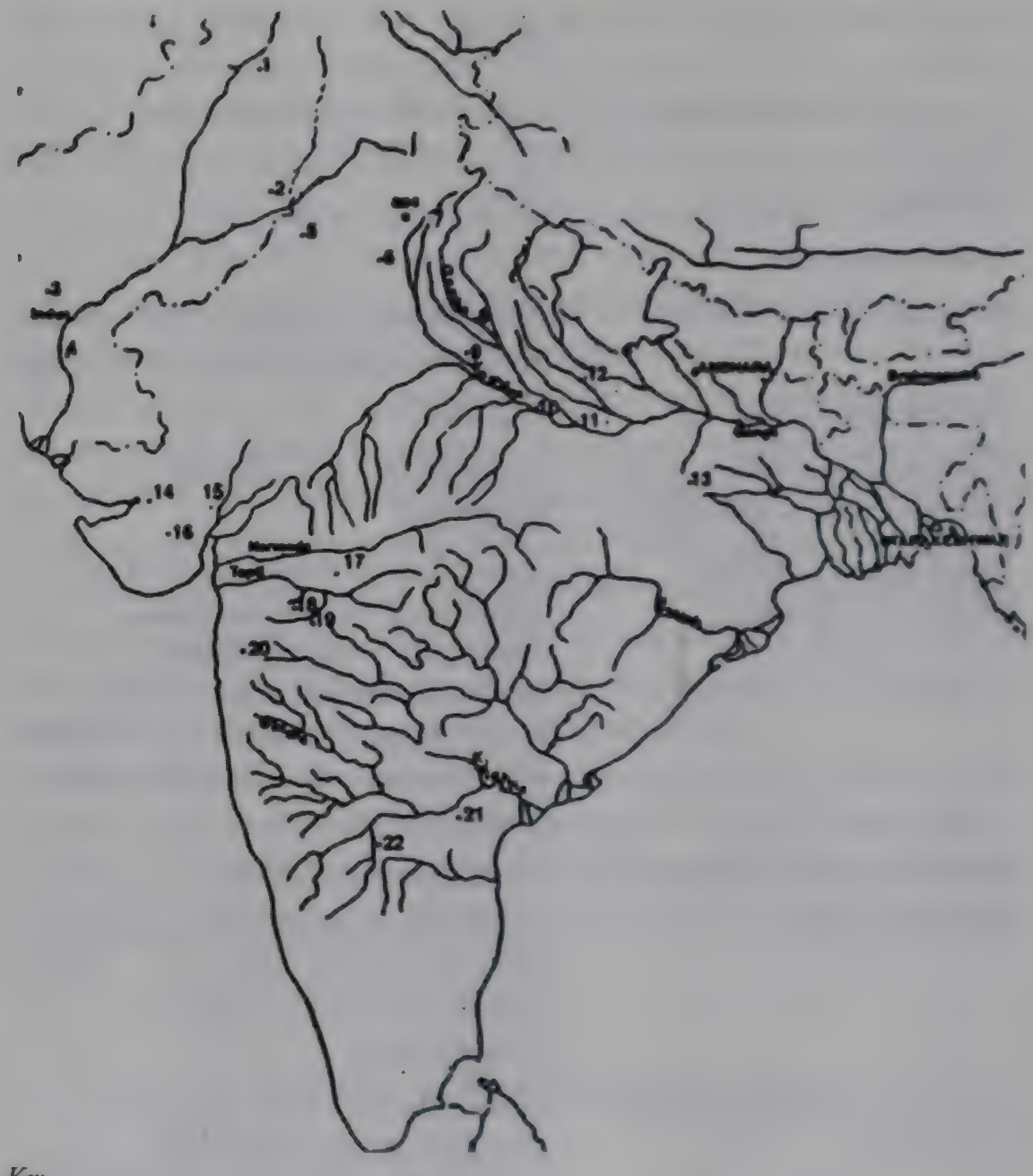
The tradition of working in copper of high purity is an element which runs through the entire spectrum of Indian archaeological data—as Table 8.1 underlines, over 3000 years of pure copper craft are incorporated in the general chronological spread represented by neolithic Ganeshwar at one end and historical Taxila at the other. (All references to elemental analysis data in the text and tables are based on Chakrabarti and Lahiri 1996.) Of the 324 Harappan objects analysed, 184 are of pure copper. The limited range of data on the neolithic-chalcolithic cultures outside the Harappan orbit (only 26 analysed objects) does not permit specific inferences, but, as things stand, pure copper artefacts occur at

Table 8.1

Distribution of Pure Copper Artefacts in Early India

Contexts	*Sites*
Protohistoric Levels	
Harappan (2700–1600 BC)	Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Chanhu-daro, Rangpur, Lothal, Surkotada, Kalibangan
Late Harappan (1500 BC)	Daimabad
Neolithic–chalcolithic outside Harappan orbit (1300–800 BC)	Navdatoli, Nevasa, Chandoli, Brahmagiri
Hoard objects (1500 BC–5th–6th centuries AD)	Hansi, Rewari, Bahadarabad, Hardoi, Mujahidpur, Sitapur, Sarthauli, Sheorajpur, Nasirpur, Sadabad, Shahabad, Shahjahanpur, Kiratpur, Kesli, Gungeria, Bassia P. S., Manbhum, Chhotanagpur, Akuldoba, Bamanghati, Dhanbad, Kamdera
Painted Grey Ware (800 BC)	Hastinapur, Atranjikhera
Early historic levels	Taxila (Bhir mound), Sirkap, Rajghat, Prakash, Ayodhya, Mathura, miscellaneous Asura sites of Chhotanagpur
Coins (early centuries BC–4th century AD)	Uninscribed and Mitra types from Kausambi, Kushan coins [sites unspecified], uninscribed types from Taxila, Vijayasena type from Ayodhya, Ramadatta and Mahakshatrapa types from Mathura, Rajghat [unspecified], coins from Vaddamanu and Veerapuram, Achyuta type from Ahichchhatra

Navdatoli, Nevasa, Chandoli, and Brahmagiri (see Fig. 8.1). The copper tradition is more definitively present in the copper hoards of various areas; 72 of the 125 artefacts analysed are of pure copper with the region-wise breakdown as follows: north Rajasthan–southern Haryana: 9; Upper Ganga valley: 23; Chhotanagpur: 14; and



Key

1. Taxila
2. Harappa
3. Mohenjodaro
4. Chanhudaro
5. Kalibangan
6. Mitathal
7. Hastinapur
8. Ahichchhatra
9. Atranjikhera
10. Kausambi
11. Rajghat
12. Ayodhya
13. Asura sites
14. Surkotada
15. Lothal
16. Rangpur
17. Navdatoli
18. Prakash
19. Nevasa
20. Daimabad
21. Veerapuram
22. Brahmagiri

Fig. 8.1: Major archaeological sites and modern places mentioned in the text

Madhya Pradesh: 72. In the later phases, artefacts in widely disparate early historic assemblages—Taxila in the north-west, Prakash in peninsular India, Rajghat in the Gangetic plains—as well as miscellaneous dynastic coins, are manufactured from pure

copper. Even in the medieval period, copper statues are known to have been produced in areas such as Tibet, Nepal, Gandhara, and north-east India. Moreover, these artefacts in copper are present in contexts which were conversant with production of alloys of different kinds.

Generally, archaeometallurgical perspectives on ancient copper and alloy technology in India have worked within a simplified evolutionary picture. In this, working in copper of high purity is (mis)taken as marking an elementary stage which is then rendered technologically superfluous once alloying with arsenic, tin, lead, zinc, etc., which makes copper more easily usable, is mastered. Since within such frameworks what is considered to be technologically superior must also be culturally preferred, this component of the early Indian metallurgical tradition—the continued presence of copper artefacts at sites which were producing alloys—is considered as being related to a scarcity of alloying resources (Agrawal 1971: 168). That this perceived 'scarcity' is itself seriously questionable is evident from the presence of alloying metals within or in the immediate peripheries of the distribution zones of early cultures (Lahiri 1992). The point here is that, while the archaeology of copper usage has demonstrated no specific chronological correlate, remaining a constant tradition, adequate explanations for this phenomenon have not been forthcoming. In the following section, I propose to demonstrate that a meaningful historical explanation is, however, available in the literary classification of metals and the ethnohistorical background of smithy traditions, which permits the possibility of regarding pure copper objects as being *produced* with regard to what that society *thought* about metals and metalcrafting techniques.

Superior Ritual Position of Copper in Texts and in the Ethnographic Tradition

Brahmanical texts, in their classification of metals, underline the position of copper as the purest of the base metals. The focus of this section is on such sources because canonical Buddhist and

Jaina literature did not consider ritual practices and the role of metal artefacts in such contexts as being of any significance to their orders. Even the Brahmanical sources are generally prescriptive or of a religious genre, with an absence of detail on daily life and the nature of metal usage therein. Still, such references as are present, taken together, suggest a widely articulated cultural preference for copper in ritual contexts, and it is likely that this had its ramifications at the more mundane levels as well.

In fact, the ancient textual data suggest that this superiority of copper over alloys goes back to the earliest expositions of rituals contained in the Vedas (1500–600 BC). In the extensive descriptions of public rituals in Vedic literature, one is struck by the singular sparseness of alloyed artefacts. A reference to *ayas* (translated in this instance as a copper alloy) in the *Yajurveda* (*Taittiriya Samhita* 4.7.5) is one of the rare allusions where a term is used specifically for an alloy (Lahiri 1995). The Brahmanas are similarly silent on alloys in their treatment of such rituals. Incidentally, this contrasts sharply with the usage of pure copper articles in Vedic ritual and the ritual prestige accorded to them: for instance, the *Satapatha Brahmana* (700 BC) notes the use of a copper razor in the Vaisvadeva, Varuna praghasa, and the Sakhamedha offerings (2.6.4.5–7), and copper needles and a slaughtering knife in the Ashvamedha Yajna (13.2.10.3; 13.2.2.16). Moreover, the *Satapatha Brahmana* (2.6.4.5) compares a copper razor with a Brahmin, ritually the dominant caste group in India, for 'Brahman is fire, and fire is of reddish (*lohita*) colour; hence a copper razor is used'; the position of privilege that copper enjoyed is obvious from this association.

As for the simple domestic sacrifices, there are abundant references to alloyed vessels in the Sutras (800–500 BC), which treated the technicalities of domestic rituals in detail. However, even there, knives, razors and needles continue to be of copper as, for instance, the knives to be used in the *caturmasyas* or seasonal sacrifices (*Katyayana Srautasutra*: 5.2.17) and razors in the tonsure ceremony (*Asvalayana Grhya Sutra*: 1.17.9; *Sankhyayana Grhya Sutra*: 1.28.7).

This cultural preference is also suggested by the passage in the *Balakanda* section (3.36.17–19) of the *Ramayana* (core sections:

third century BC) that describes the origins of different metals in a metaphorical vein. With the casting off by Ganga of the 'unbearably brilliant embryo' of Siva, the lustrous aspect of the embryo turned into gold and silver, the acrid quality produced copper and iron, while the impure elements became tin and lead. That tin and lead were metals extensively used for alloying copper is not without significance. This propensity for regarding copper as ritually superior to alloys is evident in the Puranas as well (fourth–fifth centuries AD onwards) (cf. ibid.). It is reflected, among other things, in the traditional practice of using copper vessels in propitiating different deities, and this continued into the nineteenth century, with such articles being extensively used in temples. On the other hand, in some Puranas brass came to be linked with polluting elements like excreta. Finally, the ritual significance of copper articles is suggested by the Classical sources. In the fourth century BC, Nearchus noted the practice of carrying copper vessels in festival processions, while in the early centuries AD Philostratos, the biographer of Apollonius of Tyana, mentioned what were apparently copper tablets or sculptures in a shrine at Taxila (Mc'Crindle 1901: 73, 192).

That this tradition continued to flourish in the more recent historical past also needs to be underlined. As we look into the nineteenth century, one of the striking aspects of the metallurgical practices of pre-industrial India is the existence of a flourishing copper tradition along with motley alloying practices, and one is reasonably certain that there was no scarcity of alloying metals in that period.

Crafting in pure copper then, and to a lesser extent in the twentieth century as well, was practised in areas as widely separated as the Indus region to the Konkan area, on the one hand, and from Gujarat to the Bay of Bengal, on the other. In the Indus region, Jhang, Multan, Rawalpindi, Kohat, and Dera Ismail Khan manufactured copper articles—and at some of the places of manufacture (Dera Ismail Khan and Kulachi) almost the entire production was in copper (Johnstone 1888: Appendix A). In the Indo-Gangetic divide, Delhi's coppersmiths were especially famous and

J.L. Kipling (1886: 4) noted that 'in Lahore and other copper bazaars, visitors are invariably offered "real Delhi *degchis*" and most of the smiths from other places admit that they are not so skillful with the hammer and stake as those at Dehli'. In the lower Gangetic plains, copper workers and sellers could be encountered in the Burdwan, Presidency, Rajshahi, Dacca, Chittagong, Patna, and Bhagalpur divisions (Mukharji 1894: 280). Many examples of an organized, extensive production of copper articles in other regions such as the former Central Provinces (*Monograph . . . Central Provinces* 1894), and the Madras (Holder 1894–5) and Bombay Presidencies (Griffiths 1897) are available as well.

Such articles, incidentally, were supplied to a clientele that included members of different religious denominations, and not just Muslims as has sometimes been suggested. The Saxena Kayasthas of the *doab*, the Rora Khatris of Benares, the Jogis of Bhuj, and the Vaishnavas of Multan are some of the communities that used copper household vessels (Lahiri 1993: 221); in the case of the above-mentioned residents of Multan, because they were high-caste followers of Vishnu, they did not use brass, only copper and silver (Johnstone 1888: 9).

The occupational classifications prepared under the aegis of the British government in India indicate the range of specialized groups and castes that constituted the traditional practitioners of this smithy tradition—Tamotas/Tamtas in the Uttar Pradesh Himalayas (Nevill 1904: 105); Tameras in the northern districts of the former Central Provinces (*Monograph . . . Central Provinces* 1894: 1); Chembotti/Chembetty in Malabar (Ward and Conner 1840: Table 8); Kasaurs, Wotarees, and Tambutts in the former Konkan area (cf. Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya 1961: 161–20), etc. Interestingly enough, though the scale of this practice has visibly shrunk in present times, traces of many of the above-mentioned groups remained till as recently as the 1970s (Mukherjee 1978: 1–5). Mukherjee's survey of these groups (*Metalcraftsmen of India*) clearly indicates that copper craftspersons sought to explain their privileged position *vis-à-vis* alloy artisans in the hierarchy of metalcrafting castes by highlighting certain beliefs about their past. One such

belief was their association with royalty, since they were supposed to be the successors of the artisans who manufactured copper plates on which kings and scions of ruling lineages in most parts of the subcontinent are known to have recorded different kinds of donations (ibid.: 2). The other important relationship these craftspersons sought to emphasize was with the temple, for which they manufactured ritual vessels and idols (ibid.: 4). In fact, a shift from the *privileged* trade of pure copper crafting to the *general* trade of copper alloy manufacture often eroded their position of social distinction and, ironically, has come about mainly because of a *scarcity* of copper (ibid.: 3, 5). The communities where such scarcities have triggered a shift in the nature of metal usage include the Tamtas of the Kumaon hills of Uttar Pradesh, Tamrakars of Bhaktapur in Nepal, Tameras of Madhya Pradesh, and among sections of Karmakars in the Bali–Dewanganj area of Bengal. In the case of alloy working, as the next section of this essay emphasizes, similar scarcities in raw material are not experienced due to the widespread use of scrap metal.

That copper continued to be widely regarded as a privileged metal in religious contexts till even a century ago is also obvious from the repertoire of the sacrificial vessels used by Hindu worshippers and recorded in different monographs. Among the Bengali Hindus, for instance, the *kosha, kushi, tamrakunda, tat, puspapatra, paoli, ghara, sankh*, and *bati* were usually of copper (Mukharji 1894: 285). In the former North Western Provinces and Oudh, while some objects such as the *ghanta* (bell) were made of alloys (*kaskut* or *phul*), most of the temple vessels like the *rikabi* (a plate in which fruit and *bhog* were offered), *argha* (a narrow boat-shaped vessel usually for making offerings to ancestors), *panchapatra* (a vessel for holding water), etc., were of copper (Dampier 1894: 8). Even in Assam, in the list of utensils mentioned in Gait's (1897: 1–4) *The Manufacture of Brass and Copper Wares in Assam*, the pure copper objects are generally those which were used in worship—the *kushi, tami*, and *sarai*.

It is in the context of this tradition, as reflected in literary sources and the ethnographic documentation done in the nineteenth

century, that the archaeological data on copper objects in early India need to be situated. While there may have been periods and contexts when, for specific historical reasons, alloying metals were not abundantly available, at the same time, the *continuous* presence of copper objects of high purity over such a long period in history, especially when they occur in cultural matrices where alloying metals were procurable and used, requires a cultural explanation—the literary references to the usage of copper razors, needles, slaughtering knives and vessels suggests the early crystallization of a conscious socio-cultural preference for a *pure*, that is, an unalloyed, metal, and the ethnographic data show the persistence of such choices down to the present day.

Production of Compositionally Variant Alloyed Artefacts

The current archaeological situation

Tables 8.2 and 8.3 underline the element of variation in the proportion of different additives/metals in copper-based alloyed objects. This variation is striking and persistent, at the micro and macro levels. For instance, as far as tin is concerned, the site-wise variation in the Indus civilization is between 1.02 per cent (Harappa) and 26.9 per cent (Mohenjodaro). At Lothal, this varies between 1.09 per cent and 13.8 per cent. Similarly, at historical Taxila the variation is equally wide and is between 8.28 per cent and 24.85 per cent. This is true not merely of tin but of every other alloy, including ternary (three-metal) and quaternary (four-metal) alloys. What does not emerge from Tables 8.2 and 8.3, but which nevertheless is worth noting, is that variations are also present in the elemental composition data regarding Indian images as, for instance, in the three specimens of broadly the same date, that is, eleventh century AD (nos. 4, 5 and 6 in Bhowmik 1976–7: 61–81) of the Lilvadeva hoard of Gujarat, where the percentage of lead varies between 4.5 per cent and 13.6 per cent, while zinc concentrations vary between 6.8 per cent and 20.6 per cent.

Table 8.2

Range of Elemental Variation in Bi-metallic Alloyed Artefacts in Early India (per cent)

Contexts and Sites	*Tin*	*Arsenic*	*Lead*	*Nickel*
Harappan contexts				
Mohenjo-daro	1.04–26.90	1.30–4.42	1.08–2.20	1.04–9.38
Harappa	1.02–10.45	1.19–1.40		
Kalibangan	2.21–3.48			
Lothal	1.09–13.80		1.30–3.60	1.50–2.48
Rangpur	2.69–6.94			
Rojdi	1.23–11.00			
Chanhu-daro	1.42–10.74	1.27–3.24		
Surkotada	1.26–4.68	1.00–1.87	1.12–20.23	
Other protohistoric contexts				
Kolwa	8.70–19.30			
Daimabad	4.58–6.51			
Historical contexts				
Taxila	8.28–24.85			18.88–21.35
Rajghat	1.82–13.99			
Asura sites	4.96–23.80			
Vaddamanu coins	5.95–22.73		1.45–10.33	

Usually these variations have been regarded in archaeometallurgical writings as falling outside the parameters of what is 'scientifically' desirable, a reflection of 'incomplete knowledge of mixing' in Mackay's (1943: 174) well-known pronouncement on the alloying practices of the first urban civilization of the subcontinent. However, does this mean that all such discrepancies which constantly recur are to be understood as mirroring the alloying skill, or the lack of it, of metalworkers? Clearly, this attribute of the copper-based metallurgical cultures of India permits of an alternative ethnographic explanation as well, an explanation which considers elemental variations as being related to the resource-conserving perceptions of alloy craftspersons.

Table 8.3

Range of Elemental Variation in Mixed Alloy Objects in Early India (per cent)

Site	*Sn–Ni*	*Zn–Sn*	*Zn-Sn–Pb*	*Pb–As*	*Sn–Pb*	*Sn–As*	*Elemental Variation*
Harappan contexts							
Harappa				2			Pb:2.80–3.72 As:2.96–6.58
Surkotada					6		Sn:2.46–8.08 Pb:2.33–16.45
Surkotada				2			Pb:1.04–1.33 As: 1.49–1.87
Rangpur	2						Sn:2.60–11.07 Ni:1.80–2.10
Mohenjodaro						4	Sn:1.76–13.21 As:1. 17–2.10
Mohenjodaro					4		Sn:1.2–22.1 Pb: 1.4–14.9

Other protohistoric contexts				
Atranjikhera (Printed Grey Ware)		2		Zn:6.28–16.20 Sn:11.68–20.72
Navdatoli			3	Sn:3.26–4.37 Pb:2.28
Timargarha	3			Zn:4–12.00
(Gandhara Grave Complex)				Sn:8–12.00
Historical contexts				
Taxila–Sirkap			4	Sn: 2.12–15.03 Pb:2.59–7.06
Taxila–Dharmarajika		2		Zn:12.88–13.07 Sn:2.58–3.58 Pb:3.22–6.33
Vaddamanu coins			6	Sn:5.11–18.52 Pb: 1.30–9.97
Veerapuram coins			2	Sn:10.42–24.46 Pb: 1.54–1.83

Note: The numerals in all except the last column indicate the number of analysed objects (for references, Chakrabarti and Lahiri 1996: Chapter 3.)

The Tradition of Recycling

What deserves emphasis in the nature of resource usage of traditional alloy workers in India is that, at a fundamental level, it is a resource-conserving/sustaining culture, which seeks to maintain some essential raw materials through recycled inputs. Recycling/Reuse of at least three basic raw materials—clay, wax/resin, and metal—is extensively documented. The Vishwakarmas of Jagdalpur (Madhya Pradesh), a family of brass artisans, routinely collect the used-up mould clay and believe that 'the used up clay is better than fresh clay, for casting purposes.' Similarly, a variety of the famed Bidri work of Hyderabad called Mehtabi, in the process of oxidization of the vessels, requires the use of six parts of lime-free earth, which is obtained from at least over 200-year-old ruins around Hyderabad (since such vintage buildings did not use lime or lime wash). Quite often, old cloth is mixed with clay to mould the core of cast artefacts—in Lingampet (Andhra Pradesh), along with sticky 'Raigadi' clay and sandy 'Chaukha' clay, old cloth, torn into strips, twisted and beaten to a fluffy consistency is mixed in equal proportion for making the core mixture, while at Srikalahasti, the mould mixture is made by mixing 5 kg of old gunny or jute with twenty baskets of clay. Wax-recovery (i.e., not allowing the casting wax to be burnt away) is much more common and many workshops set apart special pits and fireplaces for this purpose. At Kotapadu, Andhra Pradesh, once the wax melted, the mould was lifted from the fire and inverted over the wax recovery pit, half filled with water, so that it could solidify quickly. The process of recovery at Pembharthi is simpler, with the mould being placed on a fireplace with a grate, with the pouring end sloping downwards. As the mould heats up, the wax melts and flows into a vessel filled with water and placed under the grating (this paragraph is based on information from Mukherjee 1978).

From the point of view of this essay, the most consequential aspect of this resource-sustaining strategy of alloy workers is the widespread use of old, broken, scrap metal. Dampier's (1894: 23) observation on the presence of this tradition in north-west India is evocative of the scale of this practice:

> There is hardly any limit to the number of times old metal can be worked up into new vessels, and in some districts the collection of old metal for export to the chief centres of brass manufacture forms quite a trade by itself. Old and broken vessels in this country are never thrown away, as is the case so often in England, but are either sold to the itinerant dealers who perambulate the country collecting old metal, or in districts where there are large manufactures of brassware, as in Mirzapur, the purchaser of a new vessel gives the old vessel as part price of his new purchase.

Among other areas, such transactions are documented in Bengal (Mukharji 1894: 280), Assam (Gait 1897: 2), Nagaland (Hutton 1926: 99), and Central India (Grigson 1938: 179), while Havell (1890: 11), with reference to this practice in Madras, complained that the 'custom of melting down all old vessels every two or three years has nearly destroyed all vestige of the work of previous generations, so that one must look for examples of the fine old work not in temples nor in the houses of the rich, but among the waste metal of the brass bazaar doomed to the melting pot'.

In some cases, the raw material used by craftspersons could be a combination of primary and scrap metal, as at the metalcrafting village of Tikarbeta in Birbhum district of Bengal where, in July 1992, in the metal which was to be smelted in the workshop of Sanatan Mandal, one observed primary zinc pieces, broken torch bodies (which are rich in zinc), and a sculpted brass lamp (*dvipa lakshmi*); the last object must have come through the *beopari* (trader) who supplies disused and broken pieces of metal. At Dhamtari (Bastar, Central India) as well, the rolled brass circles used for manufacturing the *Raipur gondi* (a kind of pitcher) come from a factory where they are made by melting old pitchers and other brass scrap along with 10 per cent of prime copper and 4 per cent of prime zinc (Mukherjee 1978: 167). What also deserves emphasis is that the objects made from such metal were morphologically diverse; to cite one example, in the case of the north-east, among the Ao Naga tribe, broken and unserviceable brass was used for making bracelets, and women's head rings and neck rings (Hutton 1926: 99), while in nearby Manipur such metal provided raw material for the bell metal currency coined by the king ('the metal

is obtained chiefly from Burmah, and consists of gongs, etc.') (Hodson 1975 reprint: 36–7).

Old metal was also used in the ancient period. The literary illusion in the *Serivanija Jataka* describes such a practice, in its story of the hawking pattern of two dealers in pots and pans, one of whom is the Bodhisattva (i.e., the future Buddha). Their method of trade involved the exchange of old and broken utensils for new ones. The two dealers in the Jataka seem to be the ancient prototypes of the itinerant vendors of later centuries. Even in the image-casting traditions of the medieval period, the possibility of remelting damaged images has been mentioned (Schroeder 1981: 24). The repertoire of copper–bronze artefacts in metalworking areas at some early sites also hints at such recycling. At Mohenjodaro, among other 'hoards', the motley collections from Room 15, House IV, Block 2, DK area (two lumps of sulphur-rich crude copper, two lumps of very pure copper, rough castings including those of a jar handle, two indeterminate objects and four ingots), and at Room 52, House VI, Block I DK area (two castings of blade axes, miscellaneous fragments including two small rods) seem to be suggestive of being intended for resmelting and reuse.

What are the possible implications of this practice of using old and broken metal on the technical composition of the final products? A preliminary case study with a view to investigating this question was carried out in September 1992 and its results (given below) suggest that at least one of the possible technological results of this metal recycling tradition is an elemental variation in the artefacts produced.

Shyam Dhan Jhara and his wife, Indra Jhara, who are tribal metalcraftspersons domiciled in Raigarh (Madhya Pradesh), spent the monsoon of 1992 giving various demonstrations and selling their artefacts at the Crafts Museum, New Delhi. Winner of a national award in 1986 for 'Jhara Dhatu ki Dhalai' (casting in the Jhara tradition), Shyam Dhan is of Oriya background, originally belonging to Bargampalli village in Sambalpur. He was brought to Ektaal village in Raigarh district of Madhya Pradesh by a district officer and, since then, a large number of his family members have

also settled there. The Jharas primarily use broken metal for manufacturing artefacts ranging from grain measures to religious figurines. The term used for designating scrap is *phuta pital*, which is bought at Raigarh, 20 km from their village. *Phuta pital* itself can be of various categories, and the cheaper one is that from which glasses are made, while *chadari pital*, the sheet metal of plates, water pitchers, etc. is Rs 5 more expensive than the others.

Two objects, a bird figure and a lamp (*dvipa*) (Figs 8.2 and 8.3) bought from this couple were sent to Hindustan Copper Limited (Research and Development), Khetri, for chemical analysis. The results are as follows:

S. No.	Description	Cu	Pb	Sn	Ni	Zn	Other traces
1.	Dvipa figure	65.0	15.0	nil	5.2	13.2	Balance
2.	Bird	70.0	6.6	7.5	trace	13.9	Balance

Two points are worth considering. First, there is a noticeable discrepancy in what the craftspeople thought was the metallic composition of their artefacts and the chemical report. According to Shyam Dhan Jhara, the objects were of a copper–zinc alloy or *pital*. The analysis, however, reveals that both objects are of mixed alloys—the first a copper–lead–nickel–zinc and the second a copper–zinc–tin–lead alloy. Second, there is a considerable variation in the percentages of three elements, the range being as follows: lead: 6.6–15.0 per cent; tin: nil-7.5 per cent; nickel: traces-5.2 per cent. If disused and broken metal scrap is used for casting purposes, such variations would be quite logical since the proportion of different elements cannot be controlled, except in a most general way.

This Jhara community is an example of a gifted group of folk artisans manufacturing artefacts which have varying elemental compositions because they choose to use old metal. Hopefully, the analysis may have served the purpose of demonstrating that the existence of elemental variations in early Indian alloyed artefacts may also be linked with this resource-conserving practice.

Fig. 8.2: Traditional lamp manufactured by the Jharas (see text for chemical analysis of this object)

Fig. 8.3: Bird figurine manufactured by the Jharas (see text for chemical analysis of this object)

Obviously, the tradition of using old and broken metal is of considerable antiquity and expresses the values and preferences of craftspeople sensitive to ecological constraints, albeit, and as a consequence, producing artefacts which in their elemental composition are at variance with 'scientific parameters' of alloy mixing.

Artefacts Linked to Historical Events and Folk Beliefs

In India, there is a third level available for exploring the symbolic use of technology, a documented and oral tradition which has recorded popular miracle lore and historical events coalescing around metal objects and related artefacts, specifically metallic meteorites and slag.

The rich variety in metal vessels of the subcontinent is well known, with some patterns and shapes being distinguished in terms of the places where they were first made, such as the *baleswari* from Balasore and *gayeswari* from Gaya, or receiving their names from the fact of their being ribbed or not ribbed, polished or not polished, etc. In this mosaic, there is an example of a vessel also being introduced to memorialize a historical episode. This is the *elokeshi bati* (a copper-based metallic cup) which was introduced in Bengal to commemorate an incident involving the murder of a 16-year-old girl (Elokeshi) in 1873. The incident took place in the Hooghly area where she was living with her parents, while her husband worked in a printing press in Calcutta. In that period, she became involved in 'misdemeanours' with Madhav Chandra Giri, priest of the Saiva shrine of Tarakeshwar, and was murdered by her husband in an act of desperation when he was thwarted from rescuing her. Several types of artefacts, ranging from vessels, such as the *elokeshi bati*, to oils were introduced in the context of this event and as the following account (Mukharji 1894: 284–5) suggests, they functioned as reminders and symbols of that tragedy:

> The event created considerable stir at the time, owing to the fact that a holy man was implicated in it, and that the woman was most vilely misguided by the machinations of her step-mother. The horror for

> the sin committed by the monk and the sympathy of the people for the injured husband found vent, among other things, in the introduction of various household articles of new patterns bearing the name of the woman, such as fish-knives (with which the woman was hacked) saris, utensils etc.

Instances of 'marvellous' meanings accumulating around a metallic meteorite and slag are more pleasant to recollect. The idea of a meteorite being the object of Brahmanical worship may seem alien today, but one became an instant icon of devotion in the afternoon (four o'clock to be exact) of 2 December 1880 when it fell in a field to the south-west of the village of Andhara (Cunningham 1883: 32). This is a small village on the bank of the Parewa stream, four miles to the west of Sitamarhi, in Bihar. The stone, 4¼ inches in height, flattish below and rounded above, was described by the two Brahmins who witnessed this event as having come down almost perpendicularly, creating a cloud of dust where it struck the ground, while a sound like that of a gun was heard in the west. These witnesses soon became its ministering priests and regarded it as the phallic emblem of the god Siva. Almost immediately, large crowds, up to 10,000 on Sundays, flocked to pay obeisance to the meteorite. Moreover, within a few weeks of the event, Alexander Cunningham (ibid.: 33) testified:

> A brick temple had already begun, and at the time of my visit the walls were about 2 feet high. The votaries crowded in to make their offerings of flowers, sweetmeats, rice, water, bel leaves, besides money both silver and copper . . . The new *avatar* of Mahadeva had received the name of 'Adbhuta-Natha' 'the miraculous or wonderful god' and its fame has spread to all the districts of Tirhut and Champaran.

This is a representative instance of the process by which a metallic body could become the focus of a new worship. Cunningham believed that the history of several 'heavenly bodies' which were treated as emblems of phallic worship (Siva lingas) in the Indian subcontinent could also be explained by such circumstances.

Even in present times, miraculous 'healing' properties are sometimes believed to be contained in metal-related artefacts. Such

powers, for example, are considered as being manifested in iron slag at Sihi, a village in the heart of industrialized Faridabad near Delhi (Lahiri, Singh and Uberoi 1996). An ancient mound (1–2 acres in size and 10 metres high), situated on the periphery of the village, is widely regarded as the birthplace of Sur Das, an important bhakti poet. The mound also has more ancient associations, containing habitation debris datable to the protohistoric Painted Grey Ware phase of North India. Above all, it contains abundant, seemingly limitless, quantities of iron slag. Sihi, incidentally, is situated in the Yamuna flood plain with no known source of iron in its catchment area, but obviously the village, in an early (presently undated) context, was an iron-smelting centre. Today, however, these pre-modern iron slags are prized for their 'medicinal' properties and have been regarded as such by at least three generations, according to Badli Ram, an old resident and chowkidar of a government boys' primary school situated there, who also regularly collects slag from the site; the buyers include doctors preparing indigenous medicines from the district of Meerut. Sihi slag, however, cannot be used for all diseases indiscriminately, but in particular as an antidote to ailments caused through poisons because, according to local tradition, they are the remnants of the 'bones' of snakes that died in an epic sacrifice conducted at this spot by King Janmejaya to avenge the death of his father, Parikshit, who had been bitten by a serpent king, Taksaka. A description of the event available in the *Mahabharata* (Book 1) suggests, as the villagers of Sihi still believe, the performance of a serpent spell, that is, a charm to destroy the snakes (cf. Winternitz 1927: 373):

> Now there began the sacrificial act in the manner prescribed for the serpent-sacrifice. The priests hurried here and there each zealous in his work. Covered in black clothes, eyes reddened with smoke, they poured sacrificial butter in the flames of the fire. They made the hearts of all the serpents tremble and summoned them all into the jaws of fire. Then the snakes fell into the flames of the fire, bending and calling one another pitiably. Gasping and hissing with their tails and heads winding round one another, they jumped in lots into the brightly glowing fire, big and small, many, of many colors, overflowing with poison.

The narrative frame of this serpent sacrifice, in fact, is exceptionally important in the epic since Vaisampayana, the pupil of its legendary composer, is supposed to have recited the whole poem in the intervals of that sacrifice. By establishing a link between a central event in the *Mahabharata* and slag specimens from the site of this mythical sacrifice, folklore at Sihi has transformed waste products of metalcrafting into material symbols of 'miracle' healing! This living tradition, which continues to enjoy tremendous vitality, may permit us to explore possible connections between similar ancient artefacts and systems of belief.

Here, I have to acknowledge that Badli Ram's vivid sense of Sihi's rich mythical associations which have shaped local attitudes to metallic waste suggested to me that at Harappa, this was the only possible way of making sense of the contextual associations of many slag specimens. This third millennium BC city, situated in the Sahiwal region of Pakistan, was an important copper/bronze craft centre of its area though its immediate hinterland is minerally barren. Most of its copper was probably procured from north-east Rajasthan, heart of the metallurgical complex of the Ganeshwar–Jodhpura sites, and, as such, there is no evidence of primary ore smelting at Harappa itself. In the process of secondary manufacture, however, some slag and miscellaneous waste was generated and, as Vats's *Excavations at Harappa* (1940: 254ff) underlines, these are primarily found in the post-cremation urns of its various mounds.

Slag was being produced at Harappa in the course of artisanal crafting and manufacture. However, its contextual association suggests that it was considered more than just a by-product of smelting and manufacture. When appropriated in funerary rites and rituals, it was divested of its technological meaning and reconstituted as a cultural signifier of beliefs which cannot be as clearly spelled out as at Sihi but are related to death and possible afterlife.

Conclusion

Generally, works on metallurgy in antiquity tend towards a monolithic model made up of an evolutionary development of metalcraft

with a unifunctional use of artefacts and raw materials, within which cognitive archaeology has no place. All those components that cannot be subsumed within this paradigm are dismissed as anomalous/discrepant products of technological/resource constraints/determinants and, hence, unworthy of interest in themselves. My purpose has been to show that some such elements of metal technology in India can, through the microcosm of ethnography and early literature, both rich sources of cognitive information, be located within historically documented cultural choices, an artisanal ecosystem that is based on resource-conserving principles as well as folk traditions and historical events.

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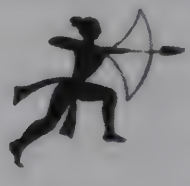
9

The Sacred Geography of Late Medieval Ballabgarh



Introduction

'SACRED GEOGRAPHY' IS A POLITICIZED TERM IN THE Indian subcontinent, with certain nodes in the Indian system of religious circulation having been made the foci of communal episodes in the recent past. What is not as evident is that this sacred geography comprises various complex and contradictory strands. On the one hand, operating at a macro scale are systems of holy places and sacred spaces that are defined and sanctioned by the scriptural/textual tradition going back to the epics. That there are connections between concepts of sacred/cosmic spaces and the formal and monumental layouts of particular places is also well acknowledged (Fritz 1985). On the other hand, outside such nodal systems, the construction of sacred geography, even while being grounded in the dominant scriptural tradition, creates its own world of meanings around the local landscape, meanings that can be archaeologically documented and that are shaped by many elements of local and clan history. My purpose will be to

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demonstrate this through the microcosm of a small segment of Faridabad—the Ballabgarh tehsil.

There are two issues here that seem to be worth identifying and exploring: first, the different types of sacred spots and phenomena at the village level primarily, and their spatial characteristics and variant histories; and, second, the ways in which this religious universe was related to familiar processes in the life cycles of rural groups. Since I will argue that the religious geography of Ballabgarh was in the cultural contexts that make up the shifting history of the land, what I will also be suggesting is that it cannot be neatly subsumed within standard symbolic or cosmological principles. Such principles are elucidated at length in textual sources, especially in the substantial corpus of medieval Indian literature known as Vastu Sastra. Apart from the spatial and architectural characteristics of different habitational forms and buildings, Vastu Sastra digests such as the *Manasara Silpasastra* (Acharya 1930) and the *Mayamata* (Dagens 1985) also contain layouts and orientations of temples of various sectarian affiliations and other religious spaces. It is not that traditional texts specifically delineate cultural areas where such principles governed the social division of space, but extant writings on iconography and religious architecture have generally considered their expositions as providing the conceptual basis of religious forms/spaces. However, much of what was integral to the religious landscape of Ballabgarh—village shrines of different types ranging from open-air platforms to miniature sanctuaries and natural elements imbued with religious meaning—does not even merit mention in such texts. Moreover, this landscape was made up of a pool of shared meanings and spaces along with more exclusive structures which were meaningful to particular population groups only. Consequently, there was no overarching consensual structure in the sacred geography of the type that is suggested in textual sources, a structure which was uniformly comprehensible and significant to all rural groups. The term 'sacred geography' in this essay, therefore, is only used as a broad descriptive term.

The area of Ballabgarh surveyed lies approximately between 28°14'–28°29'N and 77°10'–77°32'E and falls in the northern

segment of Faridabad, sharing its border with Delhi. This segment has a specific geographic identity, the Aravalli hills and the Yamuna river providing natural boundaries on the west and east respectively, and contains the varied types of physiographic settings encountered in the district as a whole. The old shrines of Ballabgarh, within and outside the settlement areas of villages there, are distributed in the Yamuna plains area, as also in the Aravalli zone of plateaus and hills. The period around which this study revolves coincides broadly with the centuries of Mughal rule, with a special focus on the late medieval phase (eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century). Ballabgarh formed a part of the Delhi *subah* of the Mughal empire. However, as early as the reign of Aurangzeb, in the shadow of imperial Delhi, the bloody banner of revolt had been raised by Gokul Jat, the zamindar of Tilpat (Qanungo 1925: 21). In fact, in the later centuries of the Mughal regime, from the early eighteenth century when Balram, the son of Gopal Singh, a Tawatia Jat landlord (zamindar) of Alawalpur village, was given the titles of Naib Bakhshi and Rao by the Delhi emperor, till the Ballabgarh 'raj' was confiscated following the mutiny of 1857, actual political power lay in the hands of the Jat rajas of Ballabgarh (Fig. 9.1).

This chronology has been chosen mainly because the documentation that forms the database of the present essay suggests this. These centuries witnessed an unprecedented profusion of new constructions including brick temples, mosques, elegant havelis (residences) belonging to members of the commercial gentry (baniyas), memorial shrines, and stepped quartzite tanks. Among other things, they suggest a period of notable social and cultural vitality at the outskirts of the visibly collapsing Mughal centre at Delhi. Many elements of the religious geography of this phase, especially in the rural facies of the roughly 700 square km that were surveyed, can, in fact, still be seen, and this study bases itself on a grass-roots documentation of their presence in the field, mostly in a living form. But, of course, they are known to have pre-modern archaeological and folk resonances. The archaeological associations of some spots (cf. Ekamukhalinga of Gothra Mohabbatabad) discussed in this essay go back to the first half of the first millennium AD. At

Fig. 9.1: Map of sites mentioned in the text

the same time, the coexistence of these earlier forms with later religious structures can be most graphically visualized in the late medieval centuries. The observations on village shrines and religious spots in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ethnohistorical accounts written by British administrators and scholars also lend credence to their existence. The folk traditions and beliefs that are interwoven with these sacred spots have generally been orally transmitted, but in some cases are documented in the records of the traditional genealogists—the Bhats—of the rural communities of Ballabgarh and in a few rare instances in medieval literature. These elements of archaeology and folk beliefs provide the basis for taking features of the ethnographic present as the signifiers of a pre-modern reality.

Religious Shrines and Phenomena and their Cultural Geography

A village in medieval Ballabgarh appears to have contained several types of sacred spots. But before examining the pattern of this

geography, it may be helpful to bear in mind the character of the medieval village. Physically, it appeared almost always as a nucleated settlement, a collection of houses of mud with occasional brick buildings. In these villages, the demarcation between the habitational area and the fields/natural vegetational cover was fairly marked. At the same time, as we look at the various religious shrines and phenomena, it will become obvious that this demarcation was of no cognitive significance in terms of rural religious geography. To put it another way, temples, samadhis (memorials) and such structures were located within and outside the habitation just as elements of the larger natural environment were culturally incorporated into the religious world of local communities. The local communities in question were several: Gujars, Jats, Tagas, Rajputs, Brahmans, Saiyyads, Bilochs, Meos, menial groups, as also 'untouchables'. Barring the last two groups, all the others were generally landed proprietors. Most of these groups cannot be simply divided on religious lines: there were Muslims among Gujars, Jats, Tagas, and Rajputs. We know this because these various communities represented themselves as such—that is, as Muslim Gujars or Muslim Jats—to British officials even in the nineteenth century (*Gazetteer of the Delhi District* 1884: 72). It is not likely that their conversion to Islam meant an ideological break from clan loyalty or beliefs and objects of reverence connected with that institution.

For the purpose of this essay, it is also useful to distinguish the religious arenas of 'high culture' from those of 'folk culture'. The landscape of 'high culture' was made of monumental religious structures rooted in Islam and Hinduism, mainly in the form of temples and mosques. The folk tradition was inscribed in more humble village and family shrines, memorials in honour of dead saints/ascetics and women who committed sati, miraculous water/mud and slag, and other such phenomena. This part of the essay describes their diversity but, beyond this, it also tries to show that these were coexisting arenas in the lives of local communities, intersected in various ways, and that these elements of the human and natural landscape were mediated and informed by images, artefacts, and cultural elements spread across time and space. Consequently,

the religious geography is best viewed here as the container of many histories.

Temples and Mosques

No village in Ballabgarh had an ancient temple. There were temples, no doubt, mostly with octagonal-shaped sanctums and high spires, but invariably made from bricks—of the small *lakhauri* type—that formed the construction material in this area only in the Mughal and late medieval period. This does not mean that the free-standing form of the temple evolved and was integrated into rural religious geography only after the establishment of the Mughal dynasty. On the contrary, between the seventh and thirteenth centuries AD Hindu temples indeed stood at villages like Kheri Kalan, Mawai, and Chandpur, while a Jaina establishment flourished at Gharora. But they perished during the foundation of Muslim rule here, in the thirteenth century, under the Delhi Sultanate. At the above-mentioned villages, these earlier chapters in the history of the temple are evident in the present archaeological configurations (Fig. 9.2). Lying around several sites are richly carved but mutilated images ranging from serpent deities to classic Uma–Maheshwara representations and architectural fragments including stone grilles, and decorated panels and doorway elements in various types of stone. These strikingly evoke, for rural residents and outside observers, one of the ways in which Turkish political authority was articulated, through the desecration of sacred spaces of the conquered populace not merely in the vicinity of urban Qila Rai Pithora but also in villages south and south-east of Sultanate cities on the Delhi plain. Jaina worship was never revived, but solidly constructed Hindu temple structures were, becoming integrated into the visible religious geography of villages only in the later centuries, when they were made in the popular style of that period. Even then, these monuments of 'high culture' were not essential elements of village geography. Of the various villages where the raja of Ballabgarh enjoyed revenue privileges and land, not more than ten or fifteen settlements contained temples. Outside the raja's

Fig. 9.2: Gharora: The west face of a quadruple Jaina image depicting a cross-legged Parsavanatha

territory there were some others where such shrines stood, but their number is not large. Today, it is common to see one or more temples in every village, but it is important to keep in mind that this is only a recent proliferation.

Where village temples existed, they were generally at the peripheries or outside the habitational settlement, as at Tigaon where the Bal Bhawani mandir stood on the north-eastern edge, while at Majesar the temple that is currently known by the name of Siddha

Baba Hrday Ram Tapovan Bhumi Kund was outside the village, to the south-west. These were almost always Saiva shrines, with the linga forming the central object of worship in the small cells.

Apart from propitiating the ruling deity, the conditions under which a shrine was created were also foregrounded through various visual elements in the complex. For the villagers of Kurali, for instance, Rupa ka Mandir (Fig. 9.3), constructed in the nineteenth century, was indeed their village Sivala (Siva shrine), but they must also have viewed it as the ideological project of one of their rich residents, Rupa Singh, who had been without a male issue and who chose to commemorate the birth of his son by constructing

Fig. 9.3: Kurali: Rupa Singh's Siva temple

the temple and inscribing the details of this event there (these details have recently been obliterated by a coat of whitewash). Moreover, the paintings on the temple walls introduce us to the mind of Rupa Singh himself (Figs 9.4 to 9.6). Interestingly, the religious imagery does not in any way evoke the monotheistic primacy of Siva, the presiding deity. The painted panels depict various gods and goddesses—Durga, Brahma on a lotus, Krishna, Ganesha, Narasimha and Varaha avatara (incarnations of Vishnu), and Hanuman. These coexist with representations of mendicants (sadhus) and their consorts, as also ordinary mortals including horse riders

Fig. 9.4: Kurali: Panel depicting Varaha, an incarnation of Vishnu

Fig. 9.5: Kurali: Panel depicting Durga on a tiger

and guards. Why did Rupa Singh have various and, what appear to be, unrelated themes painted in the way he did? At one level, the question is unanswerable and we shall never know. But it is possible to guess on the basis of local folklore (personal testimony of the late Rupa Singh's family members and residents of Kurali) that Krishna and Vishnu imagery was so prominent there because the patron had made a pilgrimage and an endowment of 525 silver coins at the shrine of Balram/Baldaoji, the mythological brother of Krishna (who is an avatara of Vishnu, as are Narasimha and Varaha), at Gokul near Mathura. This pilgrimage was made on

Fig. 9.6: Kurali: Panel depicting mendicants bathing under trees

the advice of a mendicant who had visited the village and prophesied the birth of his son. The panels depicting various sadhus and ascetics in the temple convey the central significance that a member of this class of people had assumed in the lived experience of Rupa Singh.

Similarly, the prophetic vision of a local mendicant of the eighteenth century, Baba Hrdayram, in local folk tradition was responsible for the founding of a Saiva temple complex at Majesar (personal testimony of Mehdi Ram). Apparently, at the spot where the temple stands, the ascetic predicted to the king of Bharatpur, who was passing through the area on his way to a military combat

at Delhi, that he would win the battle but would not rule over that area. A material basis for this tradition can be sought in medieval records which mention Jawahir Singh's (the ruler of Bharatpur) military success against Najib-ud-daulah at Delhi in 1764–5, the camp geography in the direction of Faridabad, and the compromise worked out by Malhar Rao Holkar by which final victory eluded the king of Bharatpur (Qanungo 1925: 94–6). But, coming back to the remembered tradition, apparently, on his return from the battle, the king honoured the ascetic who had predicted the outcome of the campaign before it had begun, by constructing a water tank (*kunda*), and endowing land and a fixed annual income for a temple at that spot—the complex covers an area of six acres. An inscription at the temple immortalizes this lore and also contains a samadhi of Hrdayram marked by what are considered to be his footprints. The subsequent succession of disciples at the temple is similarly immortalized and the Saiva temple contains samadhis marked by the footprints of mendicants such as Hari Das, Baikunth Das, and Sukhram Das. The temple did contain several emblems of the god Siva, but to the Jats of Majesar these were in no way more important than those connected with the founder mendicant and his prophecy.

Temples could also be constructed to commemorate important local personages, rather than just the recognized deities of the Hindu pantheon and ascetics. At Hodal, a large village of Faridabad situated several miles to the south of Ballabgarh town, a temple propitiated the memory of a 'Hindoo Jemautdar' who had built a fine structure and tank in the neighbourhood of the settlement. Reginald Heber (1838: 325), the bishop of Calcutta who travelled across this zone in 1824, testified that in this temple he 'saw the representation of four human feet, one pair larger than the other, on a little altar against the wall, and was told that it was the customary way of commemorating that the favourite wife had burnt herself with her husband'. At Chhansa as well, a temple marked the spot where the traditional clan account of the resident Rajputs locates the self-immolation of Mahorkar. It is an empty shrine with no idols, not even footprints. Mahorkar was apparently the daughter

of the Rajput leader credited with settling Rajputs in Chhansa, which was made possible, according to the traditional account, by evicting Muslim Meo inhabitants. Both structures, at Hodal and Chhansa, were locally regarded as temples and described as such. However, the form of the temple there did not contain icons central to the Brahmanical tradition, but commemorated practices endowed with special sacrality by the local/clan custom. To be sure, clan culture was parochial; one wonders, for instance, whether the low-caste occupational groups or Muslim villagers in Chhansa identified with such customs. But those groups that were part of local clans, regardless of differences in status, perceived these religious structures as their own, commemorating aspects of their shared 'history'.

These are some vignettes picked from a large collection of archaeological and folk images. But through them I would argue that micro-level religious geography cannot be textually constituted. Textual sources considered temples dedicated to gods and goddesses ranging from Vishnu to Chamunda to be essential aspects of the geography of all village forms. For instance, in the *Manasara Silpasastra*, the most representative text of the Vastu Sastra genre, every one of the eight layouts provided of villages specifies the presence of multiple temples and temple pavilions (Acharya 1930). Moreover, in these texts, the various geographical spots where temples were to be constructed are also systematically elaborated. In the *Manasara*, the sacred diagrams of the layout of villages and their shrines generally position Vishnu and Siva temples at the centre of the settlement. But on the ground, in medieval Ballabgarh at least, temples were not integral elements of village religious geography. Where they existed, they were often constructed at a significant distance from the village—in the fields of the patron, as at Kurali, or at the spot where a mendicant lived as at Majesar. Moreover, in textual sources, 'the Indian temple is not a building; it is an image, a conception of divinity' (Ramachandra Rao 1993: 54), a construction for the habitation of gods. But it is evident that many other meanings were also inscribed at temples which were of local significance. These are palpable in the archaeological elements

of the shrines and in the traditions that circulated around them. It is these mundane circumstances, rather than the nature of the presiding deity, which made the village temple intelligible to the devotees who came there. In fact, there was no presiding deity in some temples at Ballabgarh. In other words, within the same archaeological form—the temple—one can detect different objects of commemoration, and some of these did not have a physical form.

As for the congregational mosques of the Meo, Saiyyad, and other Muslim residents of the tehsil, these were invariably constructed in the main habitation area and could be impressive buildings: the dismantled dome of the medieval mosque at Tilpat (Figs 9.7 and 9.8), the arched monument of Tikauli, and Murtaza Khan's mosque at Faridabad are representative examples. What is important, however, is that, like temples, they were not an integral part of village geography. There were a large number of villages with a substantial Muslim population, but without mosques. This can be explained. Among rural communities medieval mosques often served as the hubs of prayer for a religious congregation that extended beyond the specific settlements where they were located, encompassing, in fact, several neighbouring villages and hamlets (for a documentation of this phenomenon in Bengal, see Eaton 1994: 230–2). It is from this perspective that the monumentality of mosques and their remnants in small villages like Tikauli, or at Tilpat which was much larger but with a small Muslim population, makes eminent sense. In the case of Ballabgarh, there was a further local peculiarity. A large part of the Muslim population, especially in the western segment, was made up of Meos, a community whose villages did not generally contain such religious structures. Alexander Cunningham's report (1885: 22–3) on eastern Rajputana, for instance, stated that 'the religion of the Meos is not strict, as they seldom have any mosque, only eight have been found by Major Powlett in 52 Meo villages. They still reverenced the local divinities of the Hindus, such as Bhaiya, a platform with white stones, who is also called *Bhumia* or *Chahund*, or *Khera Deo*.'

Enough has been said to demonstrate that religious structures

Fig. 9.7: Tilpat: Dome of a medieval mosque destroyed in 1946–7

that are generally considered to be the constituent components of Hindu and Muslim sacred geography were present in some settlements in Ballabgarh but were not elements that an average rural person always encountered in her/his village. Moving beyond this we may then ask: what was the network of shrines and symbols that was regarded to be more central at the village level? For this, one must move to the religious shrines/phenomena which may be described as forming a part of folk culture.

Fig. 9.8: Tilpat: Another view of the mosque dome, now in the courtyard of the present mosque

Folk Shrines and Representations

In the case of Ballabgarh, these were of several types. The most important were the various kinds of *grama sthanas* (village spots) dedicated to a *khera* (homestead) *deota* (god)/*khera dadi* (old woman of the homestead) and/or a *bhumia* (god of the settled land). These were all manifestations of the inhabited, socially domesticated land and homestead that constituted a village. This

worship of the earth, unlike the idols of different gods, did not have a specific iconic form. Most such shrines were unpretentious—small, plain platforms with a collection of stones or miniature house-like structures (Figs 9.9 and 9.10). They were geographically located outside the village, though over time they occasionally became encircled by the expanding settlement. Sometimes, the stones on such shrines were the vestigial residue of destroyed temples of early antiquity—motley collections of sculptural fragments or single architectural elements recovered from the old settlement mound of the village (see Figs 9.2 and 9.11). In this way, archaeological remnants of ancient 'high culture' became dramatically visible in the arena of medieval folk worship, and such worship can still be observed at Mawai, Kheri Kalan, and Gharora. Moreover, their worship at the local level speaks volumes for the ground reality and relevance of scriptural sanctions that strictly forbid any worship of broken/mutilated images. Texts dealing with the creation and installation of images like the *Pratimanalaksanam* (Banerjea 1956: 615) specifically warned worshippers that 'the image of a

Fig. 9.9: Dhauj: Prototype of a Khera Deota shrine

Fig. 9.10: Mawai: Prototype of a Bhumia shrine

Fig. 9.11: Mawai: Sitala Mata shrine containing sculptural fragments

deity, if it be burnt, worn out, broken or split up, after its establishment or at the time of its enshrinement, will always be harmful. A burnt image brings forth drought, a worn-out one causes loss of wealth, a broken image forebodes death in the family, while one

that is split up, war.' Unmindful of such proscriptions, broken images were placed on village shrines meant to promote habitational bounty.

This veneration of the village land was a religious practice in which the whole community collaborated—low castes and elite groups, including Muslims. Earlier, village temples were discussed in this essay, but these were establishments from which several low castes were excluded. Consequently, in a strictly sociological sense these were not 'village' shrines since they did not grant access to all. On the other hand, the *khera deota/bhumia* cult was incorporative—these gods were the tutelary deities of all village residents. Hence, their importance: they functioned as one of the several channels feeding into the existence of the village as a social interacting unit.

This brings up the question of the factors that may cast light on the importance of the *bhumia* and *khera deota/dadi*. The reasons are not far to seek. For one, these cults were the visible symbols of the founding and the continued prosperity of settlements, signifiers of village production and reproduction, economic and biological. H.A. Rose's (1883: 193) observations make this amply clear:

> The most honoured of the village deities proper is Bhumia or the god of the homestead, often called Khera (a village). The erection of his shrine is the first formal act by which the proposed site of a new village is consecrated; and where two villages have combined their homesteads for greater security against the marauders of the former days, the people of the one which moved still worship the Bhumia of the deserted site. Bhumia is worshipped after the harvests, at marriages, and on the birth of a male child and Brahmans are commonly fed in his name. Women often take their children to the shrine on Sundays; and the first milk of a cow or buffalo is always offered there.

In the Middle Ages, neither economic nor biological production/reproduction could be taken for granted. For instance, harvests could be threatened by all types of dangers ranging from the failure of the monsoons to arrive on time to the destructive temperament of the Yamuna river and its flood waters. Such failures led to

famines. The *Gazetteer of the Delhi District* (1884: 30) noted several such catastrophes, known by tradition, or reported by different authorities:

> AD 1345, 1631, 1661, 173?, 1779, 1783–84, 1865, 1868 and 1877. Of these the worst are said to have been 1783–84, 1803–4, 1837 and 1860–61. Perhaps this is said because there is a commonly known tradition of these years than of others especially of the terrible *chalisa* 1783–84 (Sambat 1840). But the earlier famines are well-known in histories. Muhammad Tughlak's savage extravagance in his war schemes brought on, it is said, the famine of 1345, wherein men ate each other. Shah Jahan saw two years of drought, 1629–30, and this induced the scarcity of the following year. Aurangzeb's reign had the famine of 1661 in which in spite of the personal exertions of the Emperor, multitudes perished, and at least as many at Delhi as in other places.

Epidemics and diseases were also common enough, including smallpox; the archaeological visibility of the goddess of smallpox—Sitala Mata—suggests that she was regularly propitiated in *grama sthanas*. Moreover, local testimony revealed a disquietude relating to infertility—this, caused by suspect groundwater, was believed to be a frequent cause for the shifting of the village site (as at Tilauri Khadar and Kheri Gujran). The dates of famines, the shifts in the course of the river, the periodic abandonment and repeopling of villages, episodes of political persecution—such data need to be compiled and recorded into a more precise pattern than has so far been done. As it is, the data underline the logic of peasant anxiety about maintaining the normal, accustomed rhythm of rural life. These also enable us historically to locate the centrality of worship meant to promote the continuance and prosperity of habitational area and land.

The second element of religious geography grounded in folk culture was the abundance of beliefs and meanings that revolved around elements of the natural and human geography of the immediate lived world of rural inhabitants. Many natural forms, for instance, were imbued with sacrality with the purpose of seeking supernatural protection against disease/bodily harm. In what is

now part of the old Faridabad township the water of the Barahi *talab* (a water tank dedicated to the mother goddess Barahi) and, when this dried up, the mud contained in it was believed to cure bodily diseases like boils. A contemporary billboard inscribed near it provides a 'scientific' explanation for the phenomenon: since the waters of the Aravalli hills during the monsoons filled up the tank, they were impregnated with the natural qualities of jungle herbs and plants. Moreover, the goddess was revered as the guardian of the village-like township of Faridabad against floods (*barahi* etymologically means that floods have come, i.e. *bar aayee*) caused by torrential monsoon water from the hills to the west. It is unlikely that this local goddess would be textually imaged in the Brahmanical tradition. There are also instances when a rock face such as the one outside Sirohi village was considered to derive its power from its association with the village pir (mystic) as well as of numerous trees imbued with sacred qualities of different kinds. The most famous was the pipal (*Ficus religiosa*) tree in the hills behind the village of Dhauj which was considered as being imbued with the spirit of the goddess Kali. People stung by snakes were said to find a cure with her help, if they vowed to sacrifice at her shrine (*Gazetteer of the Delhi District* 1884: 59). At the annual fair held there, pilgrims from Ballabgarh, Gurgaon, Palwal, Faridabad, Nuh, Firozpur, and Alwar came to make offerings. The shrine still exists, now called Dadi Pipalasan (Fig. 9.12). However, the pipal has since died and a *bargad*/banyan (*Ficus benghalensis*) has taken its place (Fig. 9.13).

More interesting are those cases where elements of the past historical geography of a village were similarly incorporated into the local religious universe. To understand this, let us look very briefly at the history of this tehsil. Pre-Mughal Ballabgarh has a long antecedent history stretching back to the protohistoric late Harappan (1500 BC) and Painted Grey Ware cultural levels (1000 BC). The abundance and geographical spread of historical and early medieval settlements is even more impressive when, along with the riverine plain, the rugged Aravalli uplands and interior plateau area were systematically opened out. In fact, the distribution

Fig. 9.12: Dhauj: Shrine of Dadi Pipalasan

of settlements suggests that since the historical period there has been a steady continuity at or around most of these locations. What is also reasonably clear, however, is that, at these stable locations, there were constant readjustments of population groups and demographic mobility. There were movements of Gaur Brahmans, along with segments of animal-grazing Gujars, and Jat and Rajput agriculturists, into different parts of Ballabgarh in the medieval centuries, and we are fortunate to have documentation of this in the traditions of migrations of these groups which are recorded with their genealogists, the Bhats. For instance, the three major population groups in old Faridabad, after it was set up by Murtaza Khan (i.e., Sheikh Farid), at the outset of the seventeenth century, were 'outsiders': the Khatris (traders) came from Jaipur and Jodhpur, the Brahmans, of the Parasara *gotra*, from Indore (personal testimony of Jit Ram Bhat and Dr Lakkha), and at least some of the Saiyyads came from Bokhara, as, for instance, Afzal Ali who was given a *mafi* of 400 *bighas* of land, two wells, and a large garden (*Gazetteer of the Delhi District* 1884: 80). Similarly, at Tilpat village, identified with Tilaprastha of the *Mahabharata* tradition, there is a 40 metre high mound which was the site of limited excavations that established a

Fig. 9.13: Dhauj: The bargad tree which has replaced the dead pipal tree

1000 BC cultural stratum there (Lal 1954/1955: 141). I am also certain, on the basis of an archaeological reconnaissance done in 1994, that Tilpat remained largely inhabited well into the medieval period. However, the old family trees of resident Brahmans who constituted a substantial segment of the medieval village population go back only to the early sixteenth century or so. A case in point is the family tree of the late Pandit Nathu Singh Girdawar which is traced back to AD 1525 and to a personage called Mukha (the

family tree from AD 1525 till 1950 in the form of a flow chart is available in the village). It is understandable, then, that such village residents would not view various archaeological indicators of the past history/histories of their habitational area in terms of their own community background or in terms that are in consonance with modern archaeological thinking. Instead, they chose to view them through a filter of traditional socio-religious associations.

Expectations of miraculous cures of ailments, for instance, came to be embodied in slag from the old village mound. At Sihi, a place regarded locally as the birthplace of the medieval bhakti poet Surdas, there is a mound with habitational debris going back to 1000 BC which yields large quantities of iron slag. These were locally believed to be the 'bones' of snakes and were used as antidotes in ailments caused through poison (Lahiri 1995: 129–30). What imbued these residues of early metal working with a sacred character was their 'restitution' within a discourse that is grounded in an old religious tradition. This tradition pertains to a sacrifice that was said to have been conducted by Janmejaya, a king in the *Mahabharata*—in fact, structurally speaking, this is crucial to the construction of the epic tale since the latter was recited during the intervals of that sacrifice. This was conducted by Janmejaya to avenge the death of his father, Parikshit, who had been bitten by Taksaka, a serpent king. In the sacrificial fire thousands of snakes were said to have died through the performance of a serpent spell and it was locally believed, as it still is, that this *yajna* was conducted at Sihi. That this connection, between an epic event and a local mound at Sihi, is definitely part of a tradition that circulated in the sixteenth century is known from, among other things, the testimony of Harirai, author of *Bhavaprakasha* (cited in Yadav 1979: 34), who stated that Sur's Sihi was the place where Janmejaya had performed the snake sacrifice. I found this belief illuminating also because it is yet another instance of movement between 'High Tradition' and popular religious belief. A local archaeological phenomenon was interwoven with a finely tuned textual image of the *Mahabharata*. In the process it transformed the meaning that was traditionally read into the epic episode (as also into mundane

garbage of a past culture) and attempted, through this transformation, to create for a village spot an important space in the larger cultural geography of India.

Similarly, structural ruins and stone etchings even today are generally described and explained with reference to phenomena that are intelligible in terms of local religious beliefs. At Dhauj, the Meo inhabitants (personal testimony of Hasmat and Kasim Khan) recount an old tradition about the quartzite structure (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries AD) on the western edge of the village. Originally domed and locally called *dera*, it is considered as being the overnight handiwork of a *jinn*, a class of spirits regarded as belonging to the malevolent dead (Fig. 9.14). Among other things, *jinns* have no bones in their arms, only four fingers and no thumb (Rose 1911: 207). Similarly, at Gothra Mohabbatabad, in the hills immediately above what is called Uddalaka Muni ka Taposthana—which is marked by an *ekamukhalinga* (a linga with the face of a meditative Siva carved on it)—and adjacent to a twelfth-century rock inscription is an etching on a rock surface. Made up of three fan-like chequered elements emanating from a small central triangle, this seems to be a prototype of a game. Local Gujars, however,

Fig. 9.14: Dhauj: Dera, a building considered to be the overnight handiwork of a jinn

consider this to be the *dao* (machette) of the Devi (i.e., the goddess). One may add many such examples, but the more general point that needs to be made is that through such associations both the natural geography/physiography and products of past cultures in the lived environment of the village inhabitants, Hindus and Muslims, were incorporated into their cultural universe.

The third element, reverence to *pirs*, commonly encountered in rural Ballabgarh, like the first was constituted through a deliberate physical form—the grave/tomb. Pirs were local mystics, generally of Muslim faith although revered by other groups as well. Generally supposed to be of unassuming countenance, they were believed to have miraculous powers and attracted devotion even after their death. This tradition in North India is old—the earliest pir spot goes back to AH 531 (AD 1136–7) in Narnaul, Mahendragarh (Parihar 1985: 46). The pir graves of Ballabgarh, commonly found at the geographical peripheries of villages and village lands, are more difficult to date. They were largely anonymous, containing no label inscriptions that would allow us to identify the personages that lie buried, nor are they listed in the chapters specially devoted to pirs in medieval accounts. Often, they were mere mud-covered kaccha (temporary) tombs. There were some substantial pir tombs such as the *ziarat* of Megupir, north of Bhoapur, with a domed quartzite superstructure, and *lakhauri* brick bases and/or structures, as at the pir shrines of Mujehri, Kabulpur Khadar, and Dalelgarh, among other settlements. In the absence of inscriptions or any other written testimony, it may be that what appear today as pir spots of the Mughal period have antecedents going back to the Sultanate centuries, especially since this zone is geographically contiguous to the core area of the Delhi Sultanate. Whatever may be their origins, it is certain that these were commonly encountered religious forms.

As stated earlier, these were also religious forms that attracted devotion from various castes and communities. The basis for this negotiation by which the saint and his tomb were commonly revered may be sought, to some extent, in the philosophical commonalities between Islam and Hindu beliefs. This has been

well put by A.B.M. Habibullah (1976: 251–2) in the context of the Sufi pirs of the Sultanate period:

> Whether one agrees or not with the view that Indian Vedantism was largely responsible for its growth, it is undeniable that the mysticism of the sufi furnished Islam's philosophical point of contact with Hinduism. . . . In the sufi's pantheistic outlook and engrossment with the soul which transcended the formalism of religion, the spiritualist Hindu recognized a familiar cult; his humility, tolerance and humanism held out a powerful appeal.

What Habibullah did not mention is that local cosmologies rooted in Hinduism were known to have deified important mendicants/yogis with superhuman powers. Muslim holy men were very much within this tradition—this explains the ease with which pir spots came to be accommodated in rural village geography. This may also explain why Muslims could offer a similar regard to Hindu mendicants. An instance in point concerns nineteenth-century Garhmukteswar (less than a hundred miles east of Ballabgarh tehsil) where the Muslim 'Jemautdar' informed Bishop Heber (1838: 265) about

> a very wonderful thing in the neighbourhood; that there were two Hindoo Yogis, who lived in different cells in the wilderness, about two coss from the village, in opposite directions, of whom the one was never hurt by the tygers though living in the neighbourhood where they most abounded, and where no other man would pass a night for half Rohilcund; while, to the other, a tyger actually came every night and licked his hands, and fondled and lay by him for hours.

Heber also noted that 'the Jemautdar was a Mussulaman, and had no motive for swelling the praises of a Hindoo saint, so that I have little doubt that he himself believed what he told me' (ibid.: 266). It probably escaped Heber's notice that this was entirely in keeping with the religious practices of the Muslim notable where reverence was traditionally shown to ascetics, during and after their lifetimes.

The tradition of revering pir graves in Ballabgarh is even now a living one, though as a result of Partition and the violence during

those times, only a small number of Muslims live there today. However, pir shrines have survived and prospered because of local devotion, even from such groups that have migrated into the state only after 1950. One such shrine is that of a Sultan Saiyyad Baba (Fig. 9.15). This shrine is situated on an abandoned mound (Agwanpur ka Kheda) and has been renovated by a Sikh resident of a nearby village—Ismailpur—whose family from Pakistan settled here only fifty years ago.

Conclusion

What do these various elements that animated the religious geography of a small tehsil imply?

First of all, they imply the problems involved in viewing the text as the source and signifier of religious geography. Sultan Saiyyad Baba and his grave at Agwanpur, the tradition and memorial of Baba Hrdayram at Majesar, the *kheda sthana* as a religious manifestation of rural anxiety related to agricultural production and

Fig. 9.15: Agwanpur ka Kheda: inscription recording the name of the renovator of the pir shrine

biological reproduction, the miraculous pipal tree of Dhauj, the healing powers of mud and slag—these are hardly mentioned in any text. They appear as elements of Ballabgarh's religious geography only through the microcosm of archaeology and oral history. It is not that ground-level religious representations in Ballabgarh were not influenced at all by what is contained in religious literature. It is just that, as the case of Sihi demonstrates, these representations did not simply and mimetically reproduce the prescriptions/proscriptions contained in the scriptural tradition. Moreover, textual discourses on consecrated spots and phenomena are generally schematic and monolithic. To squeeze the lived reality of a spatio-temporal area into such structures does violence to the different domains that exist, each with their own specificities.

Second, archaeology and oral history enable us to individualize even within those forms that are part of the 'Great Tradition' and have a vivid textual reality the varied components of commemoration—a temple, for instance, may be viewed as the habitation of a presiding deity, as a monument that signified the continuance of a family lineage and the circumstances which made that possible, as a structure which served as a memorial to episodes in local clan traditions. Similarly, the importance of the mosque among Saiyyads and Sheikhs was not replicated in the villages with substantial Meo populations. This rich variety is hardly emphasized in religious literature.

Third, the infinite wealth of meanings within each domain and between them is not merely a question of detail—these meanings are related to historical specificities that include the presence of multiple population groups, with their various histories of movement, with their own social institutions, and the important ways in which these groups intersected in their religious worship and customs and the basis of these intersections. Moreover, these intersections ensured that sacred domains at the folk level could not be separated strictly on the basis of clan and religion—a pir grave may have been an Islamic form but was regarded as a sacred site by various rural groups. At the same time, because the local landscape was perceived and constructed through diverse filters, these elements cannot be treated as aspects of a homogeneous

culturally unified tradition. One does not have to 'Hinduize' or 'Islamicize' landscapes or periods. Instead, medieval religious geography has to be seen as being produced by a context of shared social norms and tolerances, of convergences, along with sanctions of caste, clan, and religion which disclosed limits—the Jatav ('untouchable' caste) notion of the village temple of Kurali from which members of this caste were excluded was far from that of Rupa Singh and his clan for whom it signified the continuance of their lineage. In just the same way the mosque built the Sheikh Farid, Emperor Jahangir's treasurer, was a place of religious congregation for the Saiyyads and Sheikhs but not for the Brahman residents of Bad mohalla or the traders of the Khatri wada of medieval Faridabad.

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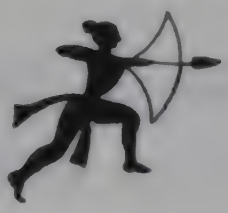
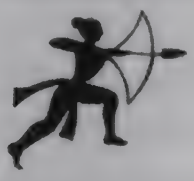
PART III



An Archaeologist and a Historian

10

Orienting Marshall: Appointing the First Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India



Introduction

JOHN HUBERT MARSHALL, ONE OF THE ACKNOWLEDGED figures of South Asian archaeology, presents a strange enigma. Few dispute the fact that his tenure as director general of the Archaeological Survey of India from 1902 till 1928 created a new chapter in conservation, exploration, and excavation that included, among other things, the discovery and opening out of the Indus civilization for students of the Indian past. Yet that remarkable man, just short of turning 26 years of age when he assumed charge in February 1902, has remained a shadowy figure in many ways. No biography of him has been written to date, and even elementary details pertaining to his education and field experience prior to his Indian years are not available.

My purpose in writing this essay is to share with fellow scholars a few documents which may help in chasing away some of these

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shadows. The material, as frequently happens, I came by accidentally and it emanates from the Government of India files that contain the proceedings of the Departments of Revenue and Agriculture and Revenue and Statistics. The documents are scattered and unsatisfactory in many ways, but viewed in a larger perspective, their details help to bring us closer to the young John Marshall and clarify the events and circumstances which led to his selection.

Marshall's Educational Background

Marshall's university education at Cambridge, and his early archaeological training and experience have been outlined in a letter written by him to Sir Edward Thompson, the then director of the British Museum, London. I will return later to the reasons for the correspondence between Marshall and Maunde Thompson, but the letter leaves little doubt that the educational career graph of the future director general of the Archaeological Survey was brilliant. In view of the fact that this is the only available document that details Marshall's educational background, its full text is reproduced below.

14, Alleyn Park,
West Dulwich, S.E.
30.IX.01.

Dear Sir Edward Thompson,

I enclose copies of one or two testimonials, which were written for me some time ago, when I was thinking of applying for the professorship of Greek at Sydney University. Since that time I have worked in Greece, Southern Turkey and Crete—in the general exploration of the Eastern half of that island.

Perhaps a direct record of my Cambridge career is of more avail to you than testimonials; I therefore append it:

Senior Scholar King's College Cambridge 1894. Porson University Prizeman. First class Classical Tripos. Undergraduate scholar King's

College. First class Archaeological Tripos pt. II. Student at British school of Athens.

Pendergast fellowship for Greek, Cambridge. Craven student for Archaeology.

Yours, etc.,
(Sd) J.H. Marshall.

Sir Edward Thompson, K.C.B.,
Director British Museum[1]

In addition to his academic excellence, the testimonials that accompanied this letter also provide insights into other qualities that made Marshall distinctive. William Ridgeway, Professor of Archaeology at the University of Cambridge under whom Marshall studied for an academic year, noted:

> He is an admirable young Scholar, bright, enthusiastic for his subjects, independent in thought, and self-reliant. These fine natural qualities are equipped with a very wide range of knowledge, for he has read both widely and wisely. He has studied Classical Archaeology in Greece itself, and at the present moment is the holder of the Pendergast Travelling Fellowship.
>
> Marshall's University career is sufficient proof of his training in all the accuracy of verbal Scholarship, which is a distinctive feature of Cambridge.
>
> As he is thus a good linguistic scholar, and at the same time is deeply interested in the history and literature of the ancient authors, he will be a most admirable addition to the staff of any University or College. I look forward to seeing Mr. Marshall producing original work in Classical Archaeology of a very high order.
>
> May I add that I found Mr. Marshall a most pleasant pupil, and I am of the opinion that he would make an equally pleasant colleague.[2]

These characteristics struck his peers outside Cambridge as well. Among others, D.G. Hogarth, fellow of Magdalen College at Oxford, who was director of the British School of Archaeology at Athens when Marshall was a student there, spoke warmly of his aptitude and empathy for Greek archaeology. Marshall, according to him:

> . . . showed great sympathy with, and grasp of, Greek Archaeology on all its sides. Indeed his promise there was superior to that of any other student of the year, and fully prepared me for his subsequent brilliant career at Cambridge.
>
> As to his pure Scholarship his University tutors will speak, but so far as I had opportunity of judging it was very good.[3]

Clearly, the young John Marshall had youth, intellect, a flawless Cambridge Classical and archaeological education as also the ability to get along with his superiors. As will be made clear later in this essay, it was these very qualities that proved to be crucial in his being recommended for the post of the director of archaeology in India.

A question may, however, be posed. How did this youthful archaeologist, actively exploring the possibility of a professorship of Greek at Sydney University, come to head the Archaeological Survey? To put it another way, from the point of view of the Government of India and the Home Office, what made a man trained in the Classics and Greek archaeology suitable for the top post in Indian archaeology? At 25 (Marshall was born on 19 March 1876), he was much younger than many of the officers who would serve under him. He was also without any 'India' connections and, despite his brilliance, had no training or background in Indian studies. With hindsight, one realizes the wise decision made by the India Office in selecting Marshall, but in 1901 this must have seemed to many a strange choice.

For understanding this, it is necessary to explore the background developments in India prior to his selection. Marshall's appointment was made possible by two main events that intermeshed with each other: Lord Curzon's appointment as viceroy of India in 1898 and the revival of the post of the director general of archaeology in 1901. The latter event, in turn, was the unexpected and happy outcome of a painful and tortuous series of developments in government handling of archaeology that can be followed back to the retirement of Alexander Cunningham in 1885. It is to an analysis of these developments that we now turn.

The State of the Archaeological Survey of India (1885–1899)

While India became a direct British dependency in 1858, the Archaeological Survey of India, for several reasons, was only set up as a distinct central department in 1871 with Alexander Cunningham as its director general. There are two ways of looking at the history of the Archaeological Survey. On the one hand, one can lay stress on the organization's achievements, which were considerable, in the fields of archaeological and epigraphic survey (see Chakrabarti 1988; Roy 1953). Students of the period, in fact, have generally focused on the grand scale of the Cunningham surveys and on the work of his successor, James Burgess, along with other positive developments including the appointment of J.F. Fleet as government epigraphist in 1883 and H.H. Cole as curator of ancient monuments around 1880, holding a charge that was, of course, independent of the Archaeological Survey. On the other hand, little attention has been paid to the several tribulations that this organization had to undergo, especially after the retirement of Cunningham in 1885. The details relating to these tribulations are many, but if we must isolate a single recurrent imperative in government policy with regard to monuments and field research, it was the urgency to scale down expenditure—at least that is what appears from the various notes and memos that were exchanged regarding the work and constitution of the Archaeological Survey. What also emerges from these notes is that this sentiment was shared by the viceroy, Lansdowne, himself:

> . . . His Excellency the Governor General in Council has determined that the scale of expenditure is larger than is necessary or desirable. In some respects the results had hardly justified expectations. Work under the different Surveyors had advanced unequally, and a large quantity of unpublished material had accumulated. His Excellency the Governor General in Council is desirous that archaeological investigations should not be altogether abandoned till they have been brought to a satisfactory stage of completeness, but he considers, that, as soon as is consistent with existing engagements and pledges, the Department should

be reduced to the permanent minimum at which it is desirable to maintain it.[4]

Lansdowne must have been aware that even before 1890, the financial outlay to the Archaeological Survey had been steadily reduced—in 1888, it was as low as Rs 96,100.[5] By 1895, the budget was more drastically slashed—excluding the amount spent on publication, the total annual cost of running it was as low as Rs 61,119 and continued to remain at that paltry figure till 1898.[6]

The other method of exercising financial stringency was by allowing crucial archaeological posts to lapse. Prior to Cunningham's retirement, for instance, when Cole's appointment lapsed (November 1883), the post of curator of ancient monuments was abolished in 1884.[7] In the 1880s, Major Keith's retirement on account of ill health was used to abolish the surveyor's post for the North-Western Provinces Circle. The most stringent curtailments came with the retirement of James Burgess as director in 1889. At this point, the archaeological surveyors of Bengal and Punjab were directed to close all field operations and only complete the reports on past work.[8] What was most serious was that the government decided that the Survey did not require a director at all! Consequently, until Curzon's personal initiative resulted in the revival of the post, the Archaeological Survey remained headless and without central leadership.

These retrenchments and cuts in the archaeological budget adversely affected survey and conservation work. As the government itself admitted much later, architectural survey and conservation during this time was desultory, with no organized working plans. Even the monument lists that were prepared were in many cases either incomplete or defective, while for some areas, such as Kashmir and Coorg, there were no lists at all. But, in the 1880s, what mattered above all to the viceroy was that he had succeeded in reducing government expenditure! His statement to the Earl of Kimberley, the Secretary of State for India, outlined the savings effected through such measures (Table 10.1).[9]

But on what grounds were these budgetary and personnel

Table 10.1

Comparison of Former and Present Staff of Officers of the Archaeological Survey Department [1892]

Former	Salary		Present	Salary	
	Min	Max		Min	Max
Dr. Burgess, Director	1,500	1,500	Mr. Rea, Suptdt.	350	500
Mr. A. Rea, Madras, Surveyor	350	500	Mr. Cousens, Suptdt.	420	580
Mr. H. Cousens, Bombay -do-	420	580	Dr. Fuhrer	300	400
Major Keith, NWP -do-	600	700	Mr. Smith	300	500
Mr. Rodgers, Punjab -do-	600	700	Dr. Hultzsch, Epigraphist	500	650
Mr. J.D. Beglar, Bengal -do-	600	700			
Dr. Fuhrer, NWP	300	400			
Mr. Smith	180	220			
Mr. Garrick, Bengal	300	400			
Mr. Hultzsch, Madras	400	400			
Total	5,250	6,100		1,870	2,630

cutbacks made? In the main they can be related to the financial strains experienced by the government in the 1880s and 1890s. Basically, this was a phase marked by large fiscal deficits, to the tune of about £4 million in 1886 which rose to £35 million by 1894 (Gopal 1965: 157ff, 216; Beloff 1969: 31ff). Such deficits were partly due to the massive increase in military expenditure because of the requirements of Burma and frontier defence, especially the apprehensions concerning the establishment of Russian power in Central Asia. Additionally, the continuous and sharp fall in the price of silver from 58d per ounce in 1875 to 37½d in 1892 (Chandavarkar 1982: 770), resulting in a fall in the gold value of the rupee, aggravated the budgetary problems as it increased the burden of the home charges, that is, the government's sterling obligations such as interest on public debt, pensions, etc. The decline in opium revenues and the expenditure in servicing the interest obligation on loans taken for railway construction also added to the deficit. The measures to cut down spending on archaeology were related to this shortage. The documents of the Finance Committee that deal with the archaeology outlay admit as much. In 1886, the committee expressed its 'conviction that most of this expenditure is of a kind which might, and in a time of financial emergency perhaps ought to be retrenched . . . we are far from denying the interest and value of such work as this, but we venture to think that much of it has already been done sufficiently well, and that what remains to be done might be left to private enterprise, which is becoming increasingly active and intelligent in this direction; or if that should fail, might be postponed to more prosperous times'.[10] While Lansdowne aimed at reducing the Survey to a 'permanent minimum', his successor, Elgin, was uncertain about whether archaeological work in India required state assistance at all. Sceptical of the desirability of maintaining an Archaeological Survey after 1895 and pressurized by Lord Cross, secretary of state for India, who wished the operations of the Survey to be terminated in the near future, it was suggested to C.J. Lyall, president of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, that most of the work done by the Archaeological Survey could be taken over by that

Society.[11] The Asiatic Society firmly declined the offer. Apprehending, however, that the government wished to sever its connection with archaeological research and conservation, the president and the council of the Society warned:

> Nothing could be more erroneous than the belief that this work could be left in India to private enterprise. Excavations and explorations of ancient sites made by private explorers without archaeological or scientific knowledge, are positively detrimental. The work is done recklessly and selfishly. Valuable memorials of the past are in this way mutilated, destroyed, or abstracted from the country . . . There can, in the opinion of the Asiatic Society, be no doubt that in India funds ought to be provided by the State for this class of operations, and that the work itself should be supervised by the Government.[12]

As this question and the future of the Archaeological Survey came to be widely debated in governmental and other circles such as the Royal Asiatic Society of London and the Indian Museum at Calcutta, similar sentiments were expressed by others. G. Buhler, in his representation, opined:

> Even the possibility of such a prospect naturally causes deep concern and regret to all those engaged or interested in Indian research, as the stoppage of Government assistance would seriously impede, perhaps make impossible, the further reconstruction of the political, religious and literary history of India, which undoubtedly possesses a great and general interest, not only for the Hindus but for the whole civilized world. The possibility of such a prospect makes it incumbent on all Orientalists and friends of India to raise their voice and once more urge on the Indian Government the necessity for the continuation of the enlightened policy adopted in 1870, in spite of the no doubt considerable financial difficulty of the present day.[13]

If in 1898 Viceroy Elgin and his Council reluctantly recommended the continuance of governmental spending on archaeology, it was partly related to the pressure exerted by such individuals and societies: '. . . We are forced to the conclusion that there is still work which should be done by Government and may rightly be included amongst its responsibilities, and that moreover to

withdraw from Archaeological research would lay the Government open to general condemnation in scientific circles.'[14] The government was, however, still willing to consider the possibility of an alternative body providing for antiquarian exploration and research. A proposal for the establishment of an International Association for Archaeological Research in India and an 'Indian Exploration Fund' had been mooted around this time and was warmly welcomed, receiving the requisite governmental sanction from Elgin.[15]

Fortunately, despite Elgin's assent, nothing came out of these proposals 'to send a motley crew of international archaeologists rampaging about India' as Curzon put it (*Indian Archaeology*, p. 102), but that had a great deal to do with the appointment of the latter as Viceroy of India in 1898. Unlike his predecessors, the new viceroy assessed the problems and requirements of Indian archaeology with the necessary urgency and in his scheme of things, these could be solved not through motley associations and funds but by vigorous governmental initative. As he put it, when his opinion was sought on the proposal for an 'Indian Exploration Fund' (*Indian Archaeology*: 102–3):

> I have not the slightest intention of admitting them to the country. Anything that remains to be done—and there is a great deal—we are prepared to undertake ourselves; and I am just re-establishing the post of Director General of Archaeology, and getting out a man from home. I do not want a polyglot crew of Germans, French and so on digging about in India, hammering the natives and carrying off our spoil. The project will probably languish for want of funds; and it will certainly meet with no encouragement from me.

It is, thus, with the arrival of George Curzon that the bleak decades of financial cuts and difficulties relating to an absence of central leadership in the Archaeological Survey drew to a close. As S. Gopal (1965: 222) put it, 'for perhaps the last time British policy in Asia was initiated not from Whitehall but from Calcutta' with a viceory who right from the start expressed in no uncertain terms his dismay at the existing chaotic system under which the central and provincial governments (mis)managed archaeology, the absence of any central

advisory authority, and the crumbling decay and disrepair into which several important buildings had fallen. 'The continuance of this state of affairs' seemed to him to be 'little short of a scandal' (cited in Roy 1953: 26).

Lord Curzon and the Revival of the Director General's Post

An assessment of the viceroyalty of Curzon from the perspective of Indian archaeology, the links between his vision of imperial responsibility *vis-à-vis* Indian monuments and the social context in Great Britain in which it had taken shape, his achievements in the handling of several archaeology-related issues as also the complicated and adverse implications of his policies in that sphere, these are important issues which, notwithstanding the abundant secondary literature on Curzon, merit careful interrogation. The present essay, however, cannot attempt such a detailed exercise. It only proposes, in this section, to reconstruct the character of Curzon's initiative that led to the revival of the post of the director general of the Survey.

Right from the beginning of his viceroyalty, buildings and their restoration were a high priority for Curzon. This concern, admittedly, was articulated by him in terms which were often pompous and patronizing. Curzon claimed to be 'an Imperialist heart and soul. Imperial expansion seems to me to be an inevitable necessity and carries a noble and majestic obligation' (cited in Gopal 1965: 224) to provide good administration and priority for Indian development. Good governance was also considered necessary because India was the focus of British interests and on it, Curzon believed, the position of the British empire, in many ways, depended: 'As long as we rule India we are the greatest Power in the world. If we lose it, we shall drop straightaway to a third-rate power' (ibid.: 224). One of the important instruments for making imperial governance seem more human and which, he believed, would foreground its beneficence in India was the restoration of India's architectural heritage. Curzon's speech at Brindaban (5 December 1899) illustrates this (*Indian Archaeology*: 71):

> . . . your most ancient structure, the temple of Govind Deva, which I have seen described as the most impressive religious edifice erected by Hindu art in Northern India, also owes its restoration to the British Government, which 25 years ago, allotted a sum of more than Rs. 30,000 to the task . . . it exemplifies what, in my opinion is one of the primary duties of Government in this country.

At the same time, the preservation of Indian monuments was not simply a signifier of the 'imperial burden' for him. The public articulation of this sentiment by Curzon also has to be juxtaposed with the legacy of government neglect that he inherited as outlined in the previous section. Clearly, one of the reasons why Curzon chose to constantly harp on British obligations *vis-à-vis* archaeology was the plain necessity of exerting pressure on the Home Office so that more money and posts would be sanctioned by it.

Appropriately, the viceroy followed a dual policy. On the one hand, he chose to consistently reiterate in speeches and addresses on important occasions the necessity of discharging the imperial government's obligations towards the conservation of 'the most beautiful and perfect collection of monuments in the world'. The speech made by Curzon on 7 February 1900 at the annual meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, for instance, outlined his general vision and the 'duty of Government in respect of Ancient Buildings in India' (Raleigh 1906, 2: 182–94): 'I hope to assert more definitely during my time the Imperial responsibility of Government in respect of Indian antiquities, to inaugurate or to persuade a more liberal attitude on the part of those with whom it rests to provide the means, and to be a faithful guardian of the priceless treasure-house of art and learning that has, for a few years at any rate, been committed to my charge.' Similar sentiments had also been expressed by him in his speeches at Brindaban and Agra in the previous year (*Indian Archaeology*: 71).

At the second level, he used his influential position with the secretary of state to lobby for more money and posts for the Survey as a means of carrying out the pledge that had been publicly given by him. As Gopal (1965: 292–3) has noted: 'Curzon was aware that India was "really governed by confidential correspondence

between the Secretary of State and the Viceroy" (To Hamilton 18 June 1901, Hamilton Correspondence, D 510/8 fos. 143ff) and he was fortunate in having as Secretary of State Lord George Hamilton, a man easy-going, tired and content to support the Viceroy.' Clearly, in this relationship it was the viceroy who took policy decisions while the Home Office tamely acceded to his requests. Within a few months of his arrival Curzon, in May 1899, got George Hamilton to sanction an increase in the annual budget of the survey from Rs 61,000 to Rs 88,450. This was followed on 20 December 1900 by a series of comprehensive proposals to the secretary of state for the reorganization of the Survey (*Indian Archaeology*: 4ff). In addition to requesting for direct responsibility being assumed by the imperial government for the preservation of monuments and a lakh of rupees annually to be expended for archaeological work of special importance, Curzon formally stated the urgent need for a director general (ibid.):

> The question of providing in a more satisfactory manner than is the case at present for the conservation of ancient remains of archaeological or historical interest has occupied our attention for some time past. We have come to the conclusion that this object can only be attained by the exercise of a larger measure of control on the part of the Supreme Government than has for some years been the case; and that for this purpose it will be necessary to appoint a highly qualified officer for a term of years to advise us as to the state of these monuments of antiquity, and as to the measures to be adopted for their conservation, and generally to direct and control the working of the Archaeological Department in all its branches. We accordingly seek Your Lordshp's sanction to the creation for this purpose of an office under the title of Director General of Archaeology, for a period of five years.

Curzon also used this despatch to remind Hamilton about the attacks of European scholars who had published sharp criticisms of the government's presumed apathy as also the feeling articulated in the Indian press for a more liberal imperial policy towards monuments of Indian antiquity. As expected, Hamilton gave his sanction. This came in a telegram to Curzon in May 1901: 'I am willing to sanction Director General, Archaeology, experimentally for five

years'.[16] Curzon had succeeded in getting the post revived. But how did he now propose to find a suitable man?

The Search for a Suitable Director: Vincent Smith's Candidature and the Appointment of John Marshall

Even before Curzon could begin looking for a nominee, the Home Office, in the very telegram communicating Hamilton's sanction, suggested an aspirant who they considered as being suitable—this was Vincent Smith.

To understand how this suggestion came to be made, a few remarks on the procedure adopted by the India Office are in order. From the communications contained in the Revenue and Statistics Department Proceedings, it seems that Hamilton, on receiving the proposals from Curzon and his Council in December 1900, had sought the opinions of several persons including Charles Lyall and George Birdwood. The latter was strongly and clearly of the opinion that the proposed director was not wanted, that even the provincial surveyors were not wanted, and that archaeological work would be better done by private bodies.[17] However, in case a director was to be appointed, Birdwood believed that British archaeologists working in the Mediterranean and Egypt would be most suitable. Lyall, on the other hand, impressed upon the India Office the necessity of having a man who was well versed in ancient Indian languages, epigraphy, and Indian archaeology, and he believed that Vincent Smith was eminently suitable from this point of view. As early as 29 March 1901, much before Hamilton's sanction for the post of director general was formally communicated to Curzon, Charles Lyall had sent a long note strongly recommending his candidature.[18] The communications of Smith, appended to this note, including a memo of the terms and conditions that he was willing to accept, also leaves no doubt that Lyall had, in fact, approached him for the post in early February that year.[19]

Smith's qualifications were several. At 52 and having retired after spending nearly three decades in the Indian Civil Service, he was an old India hand. He had a great deal of administrative experience

since he had held various important posts in the North Western Provinces and Oudh as district officer, settlement officer, judge, and secretary to the government. Furthermore, he had several publications which dealt with Indian archaeology. Also, he had the advantage of being supported, in addition to Lyall, by George Hamilton himself who thought that 'Smith is as good a man as we are likely to get.'[20]

His limitations, as it appears, proved to be more serious. From Curzon's point of view, these as usual were frankly articulated (*Indian Archaeology*: 8): 'My impression is that he is deficient both in expert and artistic knowledge and in energy.' This offers clues to the kind of man that the viceroy desired. Curzon was only 40 when he took over as viceroy in January 1899, and was obviously therefore looking for a younger man. Possibly, he was also aware of Smith's memo on the terms that he expected. These included 'permission to come home in the summer of 1903 and 1905, for not less than four months or more than six months in each of those years'[21]—it is unlikely that such terms would have found favour with a viceroy who himself was obsessively hard-working. Moreover, on a subject like monument policy and archaeology which were very close to his own heart, he may have felt that an older man who had worked for several decades in India could not be easily moulded along the lines that he wished. Finally, Curzon seems to have attached a low premium on Smith's brand of Oriental scholarship in which all noteworthy aspects of India's architectural, pictorial, and numismatic arts were seen as being of Western origin. The damage done to the study of archaeology by such scholarship had also been expressed to Curzon by some of the old guard of the Survey such as J.B. Keith (letter of 13 January 1900 from Lausanne, Switzerland; *Indian Archaeology*: 97): 'For years the necessities of Indian Archaeology have fallen into the hands of philologists who have made a preserve in pressing home the exploded theories of Professor Max Muller, largely responsible for the exaggerations of Western Civilization.'

Curzon, of course, went through the official motions of seeking a confidential opinion on Smith from the lieutenant governor of the North Western Provinces and Oudh, where the former had

served for many years. The lieutenant governor's reply seconded Curzon's impression (*Indian Archaeology*: 9):

> . . . I assume Your Excellency desires to control and co-ordinate provincial operations connected with, firstly, Monumental Archaeology, and secondly, Epigraphy. On neither subject is Mr. Vincent Smith an expert. Indeed I believe he knows nothing of architecture. He is merely an amateur in antiquarian researches connected with Indian history and religious growth. As Director General of Archaeology I fear he would be found wanting.

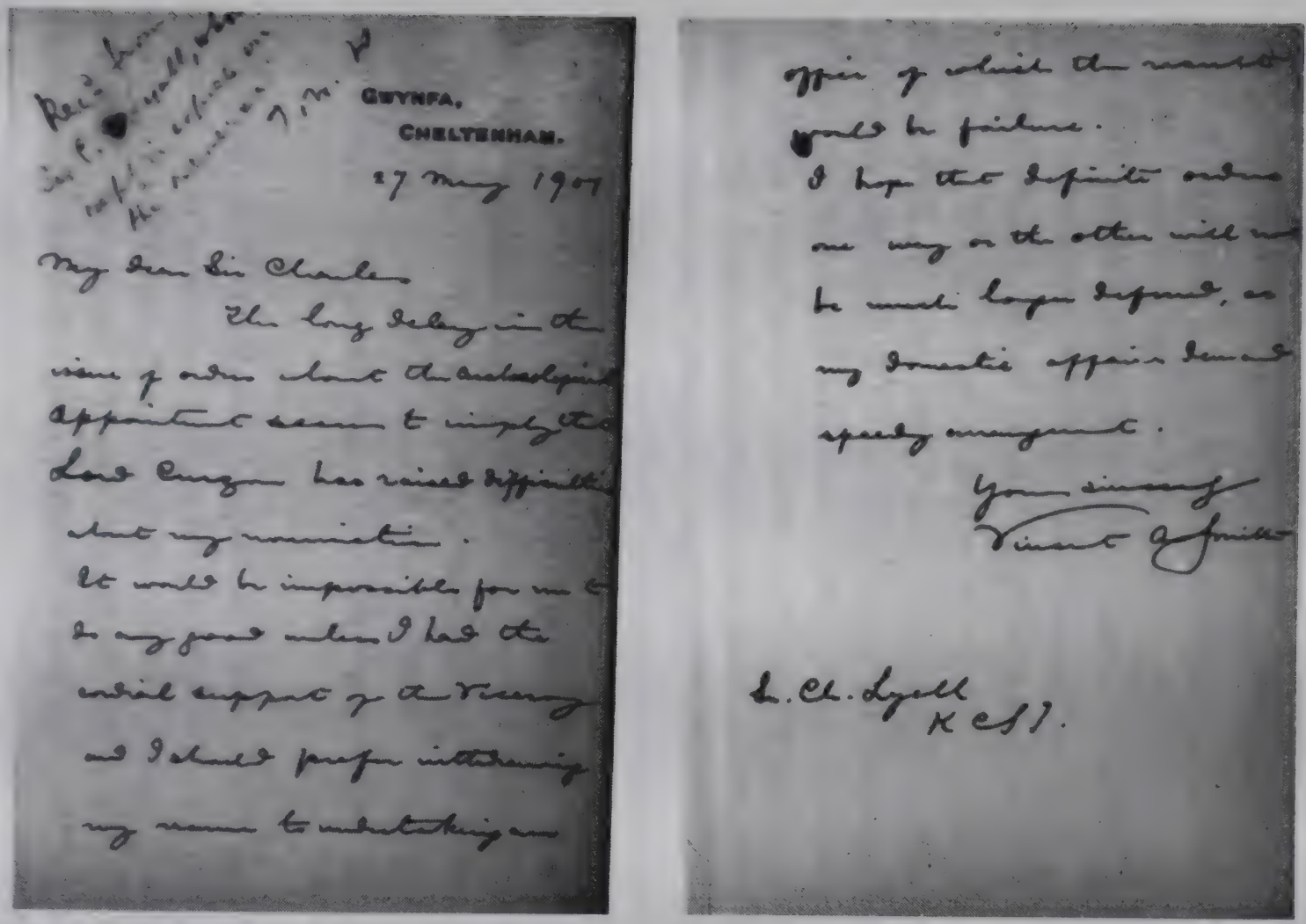
A polite but firm refusal of Hamilton's candidate, also by telegram, was then dispatched:

> Your telegram May 14th. Director General, Archaeology, From careful enquiries we are clear that Vincent Smith is not suitable. He is a mere amateur in archaeology, and has neither expert knowledge nor energy we require. Desired qualifications stated paragraph 6 of our Despatch 6th December 1900. We hope that your Lordship's assent to appointment of DG carries with it assent to grant: the one will be powerless without the other.[22]

The news must have reached Smith soon after this and he then chose to withdraw his candidature (Fig. 10.1).

Curzon's estimate of Smith's fitness for the post sent unambiguous signals to the Home Office about the kind of man that the viceroy wanted. A crucial Revenue and Statistics Minute paper shortly thereafter outlined these expectations:

> It may be surmised that the Government of India want a younger man, and that they do not consider oriental scholarship essential. I fancy that their idea is that a comparatively young man who has distinguished himself as a scholar at one of the English Universities and who has since devoted himself to archaeological work in Greece or Egypt or Asia Minor, and who has the capacity and energy and power of work would be fitted for the post. He might or might not grow into an oriental scholar, but his training would enable him to appreciate and utilise the work of oriental specialists.[23]



GWYNFA,
CHELTENHAM.
27 May 1901

My dear Sir Charles

The long delay in the
issue of orders about the Archæological
appointment seems to imply that
Lord Curzon has raised difficulties
about my nomination.
It would be impossible for me to
do my good work when I had the
initial support of a Viceroy
and I should prefer withdrawing
my name to undertaking an

appointment which would be failure.
I hope that difficulties
on my or the other side will not
be made longer delayed, as
my domestic affairs demand
speedy arrangement.

Yours sincerely
Vincent A. Smith

Sir Ch. Lyall
K.C.S.I.

Fig. 10.1: Vincent Smith's letter to Charles Lyall dated 27 May 1901 suggesting that his name be withdrawn for consideration in the light of Curzon's reservations

Looking back, it is difficult not to be struck by the extraordinary congruence between the viceroy's requirements and the qualifications of the man who would become the director of the Survey. Clearly, John Marshall was tailor-made for the post!

One may, briefly, now try to understand how he came to be selected. The Home Office, in spite of their reservations on this matter, shortly after the above-mentioned department minute was tabled, decided that it was judicious to let Curzon have the kind of archaeologist that he wanted. Arthur Godley, undersecretary of state for India, wrote to Hamilton: 'Without accepting the Government of India's views as to Mr. Vincent Smith's qualifications or disqualifications, I think it is advisable in this case to give them the kind of man they want.'[24] Since Curzon was not specially keen on securing the services of an Indologist, the India Office decided to approach the trustees of the British Museum. It was felt that the authorities of the British Museum who were in close touch with the archaeological work of the Hellenic Society and other similar societies would be able to suggest a suitable man. Accordingly, a letter was sent to the director of the British Museum, Sir Edward Maunde Thompson.[25] The original is, no doubt, buried in one of the old files of the Museum but a draft letter, dated 28 June 1901, is available in the government records. This listed the duties of the appointment, the qualifications which in the opinion of the government the person selected should possess and, briefly, the terms of his employment. It also expressed the sentiments of George Hamilton on this matter:

> The Secretary of State is not without some apprehension that it may be difficult to find any person possessing in a high degree all the many qualifications which the Government of India specify, but he thinks that possibly among the younger men who are engaged in archaeological work in Egypt, Asia Minor or Greece someone may be found competent to discharge the duties of the appointment and willing to accept it. Lord George Hamilton is anxious to give the Government of India the best expert adviser that it is possible to obtain on reasonable terms for their archaeological department, and he feels confident that the Trustees of the British Museum will do what they can to assist him in the matter.[26]

Notwithstanding Hamilton's apprehensions, the British Museum found an appropriately qualified person and the credit for this must rightly go to the director of the British Museum, Edward Maunde Thompson. After being approached, he seems to have quickly mobilized his contacts, and in less than three months he succeeded in finding a suitable man.

British Museum
London: W.C.
30 Sept. 1901

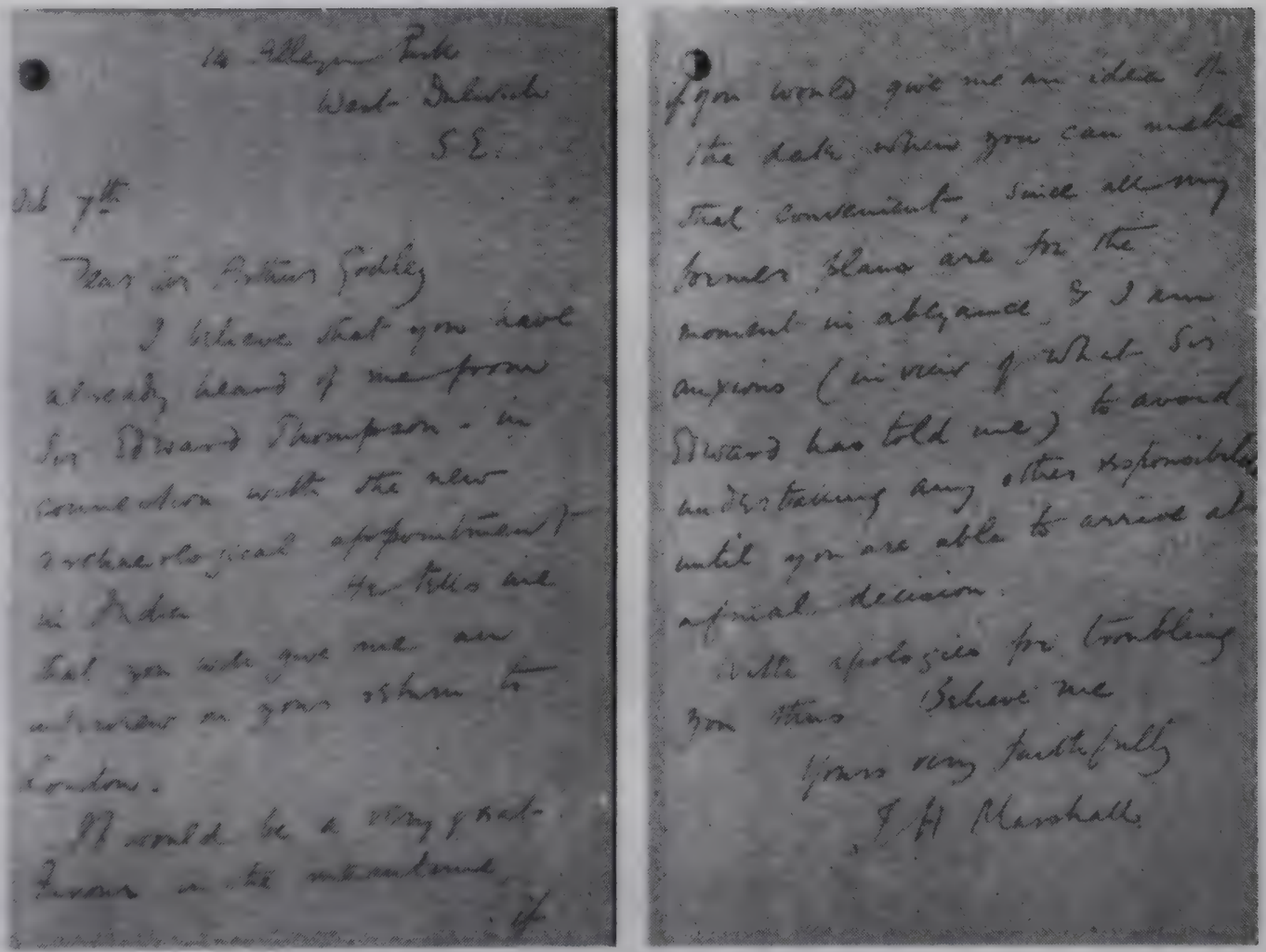
My dear Godley,

I think I have found the very man for your Archaeological Inspector. J.H. Marshall of King's Coll. Camb. His age is 25 and his University record of the highest. I enclose you a letter which I asked him to write and which speaks for itself. Personally he seems a very pleasant fellow—and, though young, impresses one as an older man. Of course he has no Indian knowledge but with his university career and his experience at the School of Athens, he will soon adapt. Our archaeologists have a high opinion of him. I have told him that you would wish to see him and so hold himself prepared. He moves between Dulwich and Cambridge but the address on his letter will find him. I hope he will do for you.

Yrs sincerely
E. Maunde Thompson[27]

Within a few days (see Fig. 10.2), Marshall wrote to Godley requesting an appointment. Godley was suitably impressed by Thompson's selection (see Fig. 10.3), and by the middle of October (see the top of Fig. 10.3) Hamilton had also given his approval. The formal offer of the post of director of archaeology was made to Marshall on 20 November which was soon accepted by him (Fig. 10.4). This was followed by an official communication to the Government of India and the formal service agreement with Marshall.

The search for a director of archaeology had finally concluded. But, for John Marshall, in a certain sense, the most extraordinary



14 Allerton Park
West Dulwich
S.E.

Oct 7th

Dear Sir Arthur Godley

I believe that you have already heard of me from Sir Edward Thompson - in connection with the new archaeological appointment in Crete

You tells me that you wish me to answer on your return to London.

It would be a very great favour if you would give me an idea of the date when you can make that convenient, since all my former plans are for the moment in abeyance & I am anxious (in view of what Sir Edward has told me) to avoid undertaking any other responsibility until you are able to arrive at a final decision.

With apologies for troubling you I am

Believe me

Yours very faithfully

J H Marshall

Fig. 10.2: John Marshall's letter to Arthur Godley dated 7 October 1901. This was written at the behest of Maunde Thompson, director of the British Museum

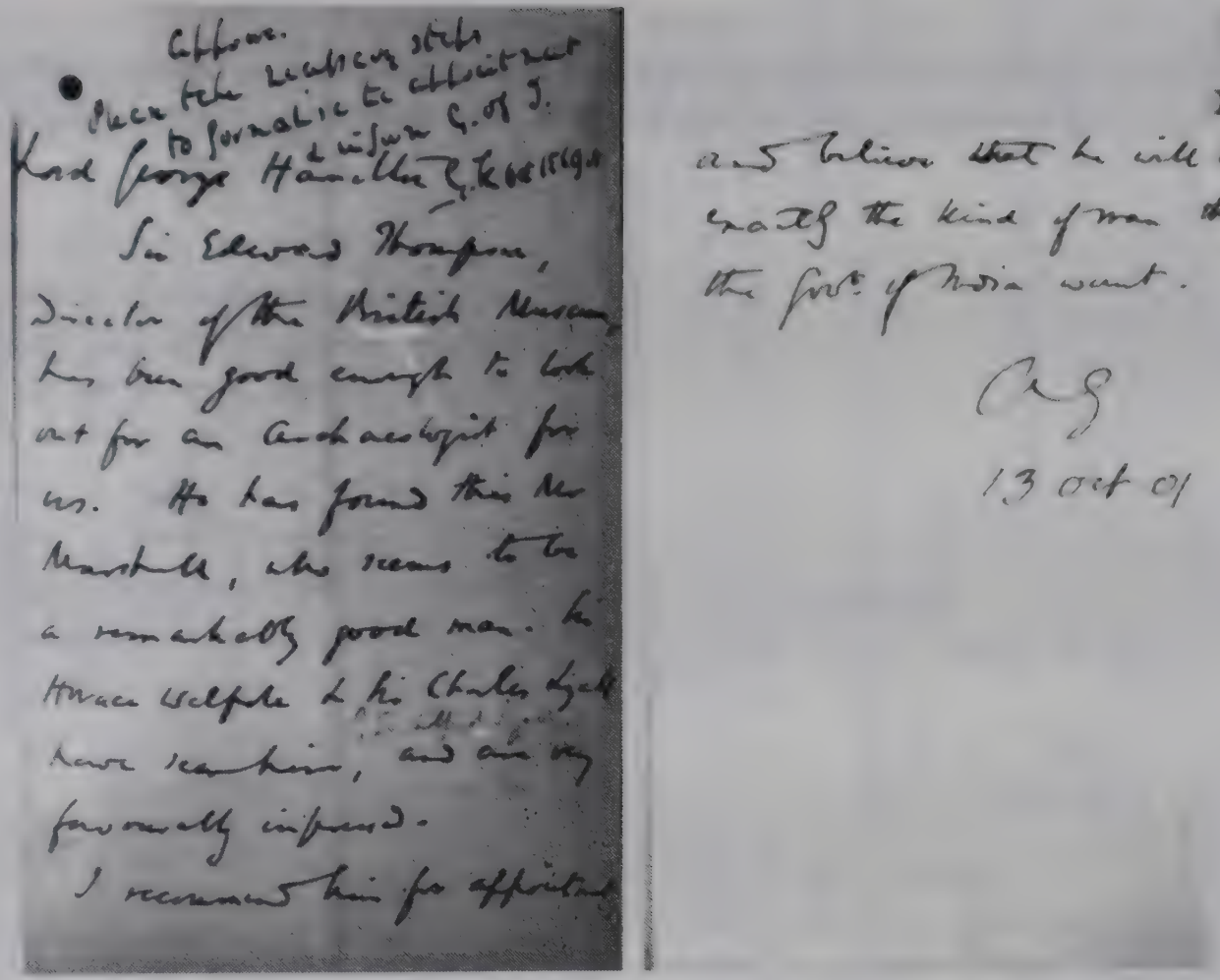


Fig. 10.3: Arthur Godley's letter to George Hamilton dated 13 October 1901 recommending Marshall's appointment for the director's post. The noting on top of the letter is that of Hamilton, accepting Godley's recommendation

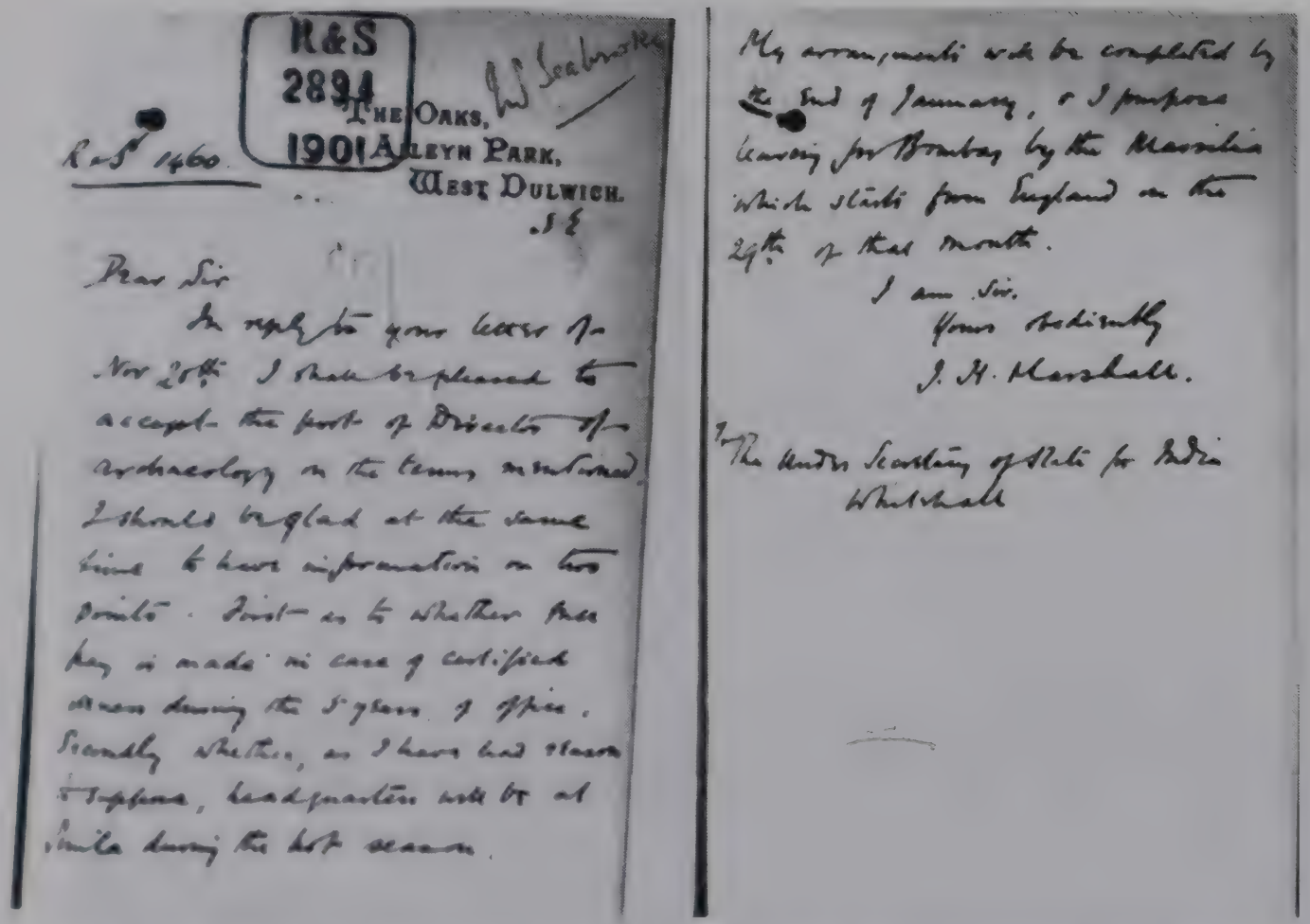

R&S
2894
1901
The Oaks,
Alleyn Park,
West Dulwich.
S.E.
Rec'd 1460
Dear Sir
In reply to your letter of
Nov 20th I shall be pleased to
accept the post of Director of
Archaeology on the terms mentioned.
I should be glad at the same
time to have information on two
points. First as to whether fees
may be made in case of certificates
given during the 5 years of office.
Secondly whether, as I have had always
to suppose, headquarters will be at
Simla during the hot season.
My arrangements will be completed by
the end of January, & I propose
leaving for Bombay by the Marmora
which sails from England on the
24th of that month.
I am Sir,
Yours obediently
J. H. Marshall.
To
The Under Secretary of State for India
Whitehall

Fig. 10.4: John Marshall's acceptance letter to Arthur Godley dated November 1901. Marshall also sought some clarifications, including as to whether his headquarters would be in Simla during the 'hot' season!

part was about to begin. That, however, is another story that may be told by scholars more informed and knowledgeable than me.

Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to express my gratitude to the Ancient India and Iran Trust, Cambridge, for inviting me to take up their Charles Wallace visiting fellowship in February–May 1996. It was during the course of this fellowship that I was able to locate the necessary documents in the India Office Library, London, on the basis of which this essay has been written.

Notes

All the references to primary sources in the notes are from the India Office Records, London.

1. Revenue and Statistics (hereafter R&S) File no. 326/ 1901, Revenue Despatch (hereafter RD) no. 184. Enclosure 1, dated 29 November 1901.
2. Ibid., RD no. 184, Enclosure 2, dated 29 November 1901.
3. Ibid., RD no. 184, Enclosure 3, dated 29 November 1901.
4. Proceedings of the Revenue and Agricultural Department Archaeology 1890 (hereafter PRAD), Resolution dated 5 May 1890.
5. PRAD 1888, Official Memo 165, from W.H. Lawrence, Under-Secretary to the Government of India to the Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Finance and Commerce (hereafter DFC), dated 16 May 1888.
6. PRAD 1898, letter from Governor General, Elgin and Council to G.F. Hamilton, Secretary of State for India, dated 16 June 1898.
7. India Home Proceedings (Conservation of Ancient Monuments, Books and Publications), extract from Proceedings of DFC, dated 16 December 1884.
8. PRAD 1890, Resolution dated 5 May 1890.
9. PRAD of 1892, statement enclosed with no. 95, from Lansdowne and Council to Earl of Kimberley, Secretary of State for India, dated 21 December 1892.
10. PRAD of 1887, Finance Committee Note on the Archaeological Department No. 4759, dated 18 December 1886.
11. Department of Revenue and Agriculture Archaeology (hereafter DRA) File no. 41 of 1894, letter from E.G. Buck, Secretary to the Government

of India, to C.J. Lyall, President, Asiatic Society of Bengal, dated 19 June 1894.

12. DRA File no. 41 of 1894, Letter from C.R. Wilson, Honorary Secretary, Asiatic Society of Bengal, dated 5 January 1895.
13. PRAD of 1898, Article xx, originally published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* by G. Buhler, entitled 'Some Notes on Past and Future Archaeological Explorations in India'.
14. PRAD of 1898, letter from Elgin and Council to George Hamilton, Secretary of State for India, dated 16 June 1898.
15. PRAD of 1898, letter from Elgin and Council to George Hamilton, dated 14 July 1898.
16. PRAD of 1901, telegram from George Hamilton to Curzon, dated 14 May 1901.
17. R & S File no. 326/1901, Charles Lyall's note, dated 29 March 1901.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., letter from Vincent Smith to Charles Lyall, dated 7 March 1901.
20. Ibid., R&S Minute paper on the subject of Director General of Archaeology for India, dated 29 March 1901.
21. Ibid., Memo from Vincent Smith, dated 11 March 1901.
22. PRAD of 1901, telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, dated May 1901.
23. R&S File no. 326/1901, R&S Minute paper on the subject of appointment of a Director General of Archaeology, dated 29 May 1901.
24. Ibid., letter from Arthur Godley to George Hamilton, dated 4 June 1901.
25. Chakrabarti's surmise (1988: 170, fn 6) that Marshall had no formal links with the British Museum may need some modification; the papers and letters of Maunde Thompson between July and September 1900 should contain several communications concerning Marshall.
26. R&S File no. 326/1901, R&S Minute paper on the subject of Director of the Indian Archaeological Department, bearing the initials of the Under Secretary of the Department, dated 28 June 1901.
27. Letter from Maunde Thompson to Arthur Godley, dated 30 September 1901.

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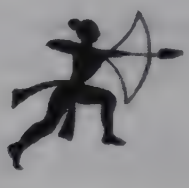
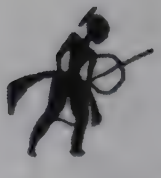
11

Marshall's Early Years at the Archaeological Survey of India



Introduction



'TO FUTURE GENERATIONS HE WILL ALWAYS BE THE MAN who, archaeologically speaking, left India three thousand years older than he had found her', wrote Alfred Foucher about John Marshall in his foreword to *Revealing India's Past* (Cummings 1939: 355). He continued: '. . . just as the early period of the Archaeological Survey of India is identified with Alexander Cunningham's career, so is the later period entirely impersonated by Sir John Marshall.'

This should not be read only as the tribute of a fond friend and collaborator. What John Marshall accomplished in his long archaeological career as director general of archaeology in India (1902–28) has scarcely been equalled to date and, while one may hesitate to see the Archaeological Survey of India as being 'impersonated' by him, the spirit of Foucher's sentiment is correct. Written fifty years later, Dilip Chakrabarti's *tour de force* of Indian archaeology

Originally published in 1998 as 'Coming to Grips with the Indian Past: John Marshall's Early Years as Lord Curzon's Director-General of Archaeology in India—Part I', *South Asian Studies*, 14: 1–23.

(1988: 170) echoed the same sentiment: 'The large exposed and conserved sites we see, the gardens around the monuments we appreciate, the museums we enter and the objects we admire, the objects on which much of our own perception of our past is based—these are all intimately linked with the period which we here have called "the John Marshall period" in the history of Indian archaeology.'

The purpose of this essay, however, is not to recount the landmarks of Marshall's Indian career. Instead, I will try to grope my way through Marshall's early years so as to recover a few signposts that will help us to better understand how this young Cambridge archaeologist, whose name has come to be linked with the archaeological image of ancient India, first came to grips with the Indian past. These years broadly coincided with the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon (1899–1905) who played a decisive role in grooming Marshall. Equally important, the scale and nature of monuments, the diversity of political control exercised over different parts of the subcontinental landmass where they stood, as also the range of interactions with various people in the region impinged on and influenced him in various ways. There is a wealth of archival information available on these issues and, through the maze of detail, a great deal of the subcontinental archaeological universe in which Marshall occupied an important space also gets refracted. Finally, these years provide the baseline for the genealogies of several of Marshall's definitive works. With the benefit of retrospective appraisal, one recognizes the need to explore the circumstances and situations in which these first glimmerings appear, even though John Marshall himself at this stage showed no obvious preoccupation with them.

From Dulwich to Simla

Born on 19 March 1876, Marshall was only 25 years old when the position of director of archaeology in India was offered to him by George Hamilton, the secretary of state for India. Thanks to an abundant documentation, it has been possible to understand the

crucial factors in his appointment—Marshall's excellent credentials; Curzon's indication that he did not require an Oriental scholar but a comparatively young, albeit distinguished, archaeologist from one of the English universities; the Home Office's judicious resolution to accept Curzon's rejection of Vincent Smith's candidature and, instead, approach the trustees of the British Museum; and Maunde Thompson's remarkably quick choice of the young Cambridge man for what he described as the India Office's post of 'archaeological inspector' (Lahiri 1997). The agreement 'for service in India as Director of Archaeology' for a period of five years between 'John Hubert Marshall of The Oaks, Alleyn Park West Dulwich London S.E.' and 'the Secretary of State for India in Council' was signed on 23 December, 1901.[1] On 6 February 1902, Marshall sailed for Bombay on the *S.S. Massilia*[2] and took charge on the very day that he arrived there.[3]

Let us briefly go back to England and to the interregnum (November 1901–January 1902) between Marshall's acceptance of Hamilton's offer and his departure for India. One fact that does appear to be certain, and this is what makes this interregnum important, is that it was used by the future director to familiarize himself with Indian archaeology. From the time that Thompson's selection was formalized by the India Office, Marshall specifically proposed to work till Christmas on the earlier reports of the district surveyors and on the Indian department of the British Museum.[4] It is just possible that this was the first time he saw the British Museum seals from Harappa.[5] At the suggestion of the Indian government, he was also asked to visit James Burgess, the previous director of the Archaeological Survey who, after having retired in 1889, had been entrusted with the writing of a large number of archaeological publications. However, his progress had been so slow that the Government of India seemed to be on the verge of transferring the work to other hands and only proposed to await Marshall's advice before coming to a decision.[6]

In the three days that Marshall spent with Burgess in Edinburgh in December, the exact state of the government publications that the latter had in hand was ascertained. These consisted of five proposed volumes of which one—the Baroda monograph—was

nearing completion, while for the one on Ahmedabad architecture, there were drawings and photographs but no reports. In the case of the other three—on Deccan architecture, Bijapur, and Vijayanagar—there were rough copies of reports along with private notes on architecture and historical information.

Also, and this is beyond doubt, a special effort was made by Burgess to draw Marshall's attention to the excellent photographs of the Buddhist monuments of Sanchi that had been taken by Henry Cousens and their importance for illustrating early Indian art. Burgess was interested in getting these photographs published, visualizing them in a monograph in which 'the letterpress need not be extensive or elaborate: it would only state what is already known respecting the subjects of the sculptures—the object of the publication being mainly to supply the materials for the students to interpret'.[7] The eventual publication of the definitive volumes on Sanchi (Marshall and Foucher 1940) had much more 'letterpress' than Burgess had envisaged for them but used Cousens's photographs that had evidently been prepared before Marshall even came to India. The chronology of the documentation and collaboration involved in *The Monuments of Sanchi* remains to be constructed, but the original idea of an extensively illustrated work on these monuments can very precisely be credited to James Burgess.

Armed with whatever information he could garner from department papers, publications, and meetings with various people connected with India, Marshall landed at Bombay two and a half weeks after the *S.S. Massilia* had sailed from Marseilles. His limited knowledge of India may have prepared him somewhat for the magnificent contrast in the geographical scale of the subcontinent and his previous field area, the former being at least twenty times the size of Greece, Turkey, and Crete. His travels over the next five weeks must also have underscored this difference—from Bombay on the western shores to Calcutta and then, towards the end of March, across the heart of Gangetic India to the north-western Himalaya and Simla, the summer headquarters of the government.

In Bombay, Marshall lost no time in catching his first glimpse of ancient Indian monuments—the caves at Elephanta and Kanheri.[8] His official report on them only contains his assessment

of their state of preservation. Elephanta was kept in 'a state of thorough repair' but at Kanheri, there was extensive disfiguring graffiti and a fakir in the great chaitya hall whose ejection Marshall recommended.[9] From Bombay he proceeded to Bhusawal, then in Khandesh district, to meet up with Henry Cousens, the archaeological surveyor of western India. Bhusawal owed its importance mainly to the fact that it was at the junction of the Nagpur rail branch with the main line of the Great Indian Peninsular Railway, and one imagines that it was from here that Marshall travelled to Calcutta.

A considerable amount of time there was spent in reading up the Archaeological Survey publications and gaining a familiarity with the archaeological collection of the Indian Museum.[10] Later, Marshall would become directly responsible for this section of the museum. But the main purpose for which he had travelled to Calcutta was to ascertain the lines on which he was to direct the work of the Archaeological Survey.

This naturally involved a meeting with George Nathaniel Curzon. The viceroy had just returned from a tour of north Bengal, where he had inspected the ruins of Pandua, and was soon to leave for the Nizam's territory in Hyderabad, on his way to becoming the first governor general to have seen the exquisite frescoes of Ajanta (Ronaldshay 1928, II: 209–11). There is no trace in the official records of what the young director's first impressions of Curzon were, except a stray remark many years later that 'Lord Curzon's ideas of what had to be done were all-embracing' (Marshall 1939: 13). Curzon, however, preserved the memory of their first meeting: 'I made his acquaintance before leaving Calcutta, and thought him rather distinguished in appearance and quite becomingly keen. I told him that he must learn Sanskrit at once, in order to be able to deal with inscriptions, one of the most important branches of Indian Archaeology.'[11] A more prolonged interaction between them would take place during the viceroy's summer sojourn in Simla.

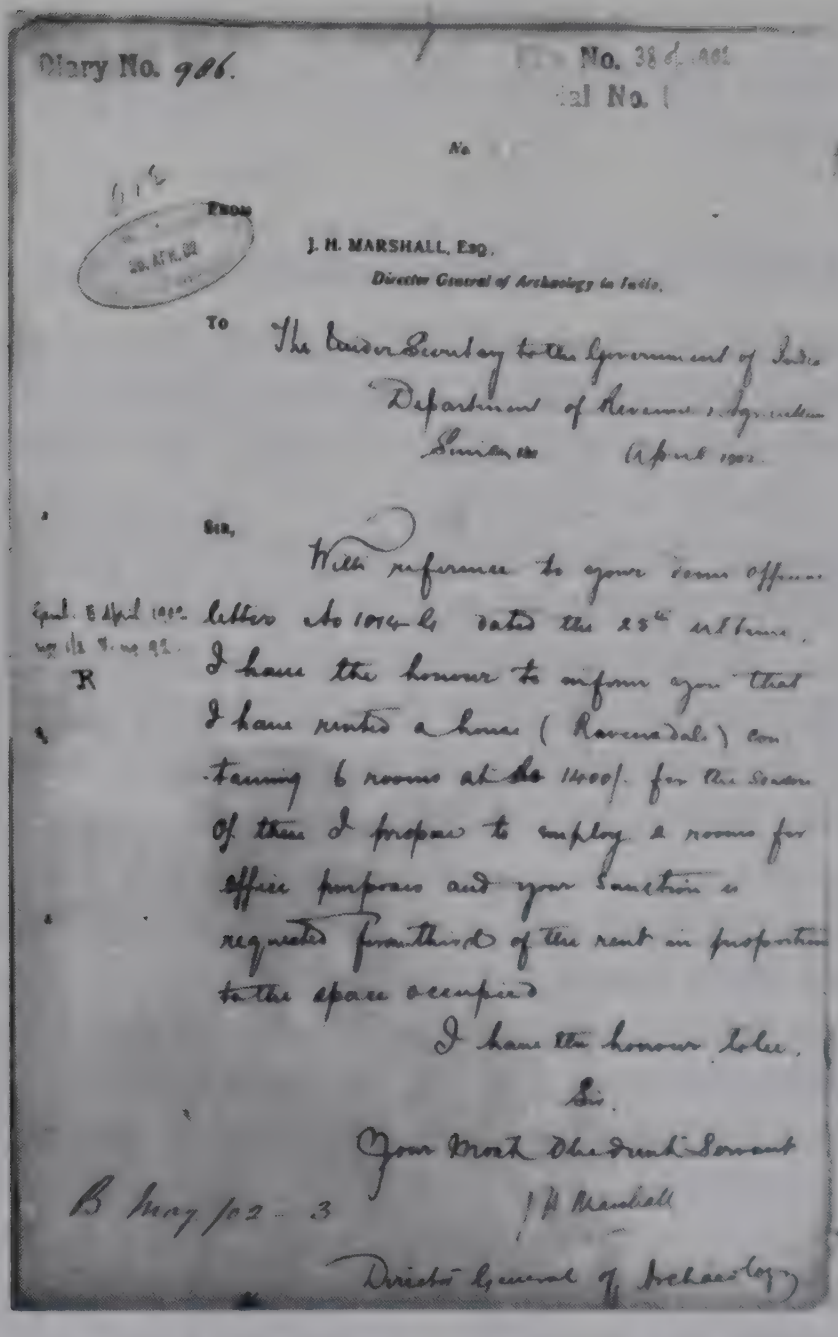
Marshall left for Simla on 25 March. A communication on that day[12] laid to rest his anxiety about whether the summer capital

was to be his headquarters 'during the hot season'.[13] In June Curzon was to inform him that his permanent headquarters were, in fact, to be at Simla.[14]

Setting Up the Director General's Establishment

It was a small-scale, unremarkable beginning. For the first season, the office of the director general functioned from two rooms of the six that made up 'Ravensdale', the house that Marshall rented for his residence in Simla (Fig. 11.1).[15] Subsequently, in 1903, three rooms in 'Benmore' were provided for the accommodation of his office.[16] This house, situated in the wooded Chota Simla stretch near Barnes Court, belonged to the provincial Government of Punjab. Marshall shared the building with the Judge Advocate General, Army Head-Quarters, Director-General of Education, Consulting Architect to the Government of India, and Chief Inspector of Explosives and this is where his office remained till the civil secretariat buildings on the Gorton Castle Estate were completed (Buck 1904: 111). The establishment was initially manned by one *duftri*, two peons, just one technical staff—a draughtsman—and a clerk. The clerk, P.K. Mukherji, had been transferred to his office from the Revenue and Agriculture Department.

The technical draughtsman was P.C. Mukherjee, an archaeological explorer of some repute. He had been serving as a pundit with the Bengal archaeological staff and had been recommended by the government and employed by Marshall in Calcutta itself.[17] Yet Marshall chose not to mention this in his obituary notice when the latter died in August 1903.[18] This may have been because theirs was a short and unhappy association. Mukherjee, an accomplished man in his own right, had seen a steady decline in his total emoluments since 1885 when he was first employed in the Archaeological Survey. He soon came to regard his new appointment as being unremunerative since he was not entitled to allowances admissible under the Simla Allowance Code.[19] Marshall, in turn, found him 'unreliable and incompetent'.[20] As he put it, 'his services were recommended by Government on the strength of his former work,



Diary No. 986.

No. 38 d. 1901
Serial No. 1

No.

From

J. H. MARSHALL, Esq.,
Director General of Archæology in India.

To The Under Secretary to the Government of India
Department of Revenue & Agriculture
Simla

April 1902.

Sir,

With reference to your [illegible] office
Govt. 8 April 1902. letter No 1014-L dated the 23rd ultimo,
No 13 dated 9 May 02.
R I have the honour to inform you that
I have rented a house (Ravensdale) con-
taining 6 rooms at Rs 1400/- for the season.
Of these I propose to employ 2 rooms for
office purposes and your sanction is
requested for one-third of the rent in proportion
to the space occupied.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most Obedient Servant
J H Marshall
Director General of Archæology

B May 02 - 3

11.1 John Marshall's letter to the undersecretary of the Department of Revenue and Agriculture, dated 25 April 1902. In this letter, Marshall requested that he be permitted to use two rooms as office space in the house ('Ravensdale') that he had rented in Simla

and it appears that in previous years his salary was higher, though I have reason to suspect that his abilities also were then, perhaps, on a different grade'.[21] He was shortly thereafter transferred back to Bengal where he worked till his death as Theodor Bloch's assistant in the Bengal Circle.

In the course of 1902, once the director general's office was

made permanent at Simla, it came to include additional provision for a photographer, two clerks, and one head clerk.[22] However, before sanctioning the expansion of his clerical establishment, the department required statistics of the number of letters received and issued by Marshall's office! The latter, at this point in the middle of his tour of the United Provinces and Oudh, sent in the details from 'Camp Agra'. Apparently, from the latter part of April, when Marshall had returned from his spring tour, till the third week of August, he had received 400 letters and issued 390, that is, an average of 198 letters received and issued every month.[23]

It was a modest establishment, even in relation to other archaeological establishments in the country. A mere Rs 2,700 was spent in 1902–3 on salaries in Marshall's office in comparison to the United Provinces and Oudh which spent Rs 3,960 or the Punjab where the expenditure was Rs 3,160.[24] Marshall made it clear that he had no intention of saddling himself with more assistance than was absolutely necessary at this stage. Since his functions in relation to the various circles of the Archaeological Survey were meant to be mainly advisory, he probably felt that this was an adequate staff. By the end of March 1903, however, he was forced to admit that although he had tried to cut down his office work as much as possible, it was growing so rapidly that he would soon require additional assistance.[25]

Marshall's manner of organizing his tour equipment and the privileges that his establishment was entitled to when he was on tour was equally tentative. For instance, it was only after his spring and summer tours, during which he must have occasionally suffered because he seems to have carried no tents with him, that he enquired about arrangements for camping. He was told to purchase his own tents by R.E.V. Arbuthnot of the Revenue and Agriculture Department who also suggested that these should include a Swiss cottage tent, a hill tent, a sleeping 'pal' and one or more servant 'pals'.[26] Again, Marshall took his time in requesting for halting allowances (while on tour) for his establishment and, consequently, had to ask for a retrospective sanction for the halt that he made at Charsada in the spring of 1903.[27]

Positive initiative, however, was taken in spheres where it mattered most—as, for instance, in beginning the process of setting up an archaeological library attached to his establishment. This suggestion had come from Lord Curzon in the course of a conversation with Marshall on 9 June 1902,[28] and almost immediately the latter began the process of formalizing this proposal. This was to be a library primarily for aiding the archaeological surveyors in their work and research. A sum of Rs 6,000 was sought and provided for it; Marshall could purchase any book or series of publications from this without requiring prior sanction, provided that the cost did not exceed Rs 100.[29] The library probably did not get into working order till 1904, but, from the beginning, Marshall worked steadily and by March 1903 had succeeded in purchasing several hundred books. Because of his personal interest, the complete series of the journals of the Royal Asiatic Societies of London, Bombay, and Colombo, and of the Bengal Asiatic Society were supplied at about half their original price. A full set of the British Museum's archaeological publications was presented by Maunde Thompson, including, Marshall informs us, 'the twenty-seven volumes on the numismatics of Rome, Greece, Asia Minor, Persia, India and China, some of which it is now impossible to buy'.[30] A special effort was also made to provide for those volumes that were not available in provincial libraries but were required by the archaeological surveyors there in connection with their lines of work. So volumes such as 'Avebury, Chabas, Hutchinson, Lubbock, Evan, Munnro, Nadaillac, Westropp and Wilson on prehistoric antiquities' were purchased for the use of Alexander Rea to help him in his work at Aditannallur in Tinnevelly.[31] Even in the field Marshall continued to work on building up the library collection, sending a list of eighty reports that were required from Vellore to the Department of Revenue and Agriculture in Calcutta as also requesting their sanction for purchasing a copy of one of James Prinsep's publications.[32] In this case, a sanction was required since its cost was Rs 120.

In short, while Marshall's manner of setting up his establishment may have been excessively cautious, yet his personal interest and initiative resulted in a more enduring contribution—a nucleus of

books for what was destined to become the most famed archaeological library of India.

A Vast and Wonderful Field as India

Marshall, like Curzon, forged his relationship with India through travel. In his first year alone, from the time that he reached Simla in spring till April 1903, over eight months were spent in surveys that covered almost all the archaeological circles in the subcontinent.[33] In the spring tour that began on 8 April, Marshall visited Mathura, Brindaban, Mahaban, Agra, and Delhi (in the last two, he accompanied Curzon), while the summer tour, from 25 July, covered Lahore, Ajmer, Chittorgarh, Agra, and Delhi.[34] The winter tour, which commenced on 5 November, was the longest and included the North West Frontier Province, Lahore, Agra, Gwalior, Ujjain, Dewas, Indore, and Ratlam in its first leg. This was followed (15 December to 10 January and 4 February to 10 February) by an extensive tour of the Bombay Presidency covering Ahmedabad, Bombay, Bijapur, Poona, and Karle. In between the two journeys to that area, Marshall covered Vijayanagar, Trichy, Tanjore, Bangalore, and Kanjivaram. This was followed by visits to Dhar, Mandu, Ajmer, and Mount Abu. From 4 till 21 March, the director was back again at Agra and Delhi. From there, he proceeded to Charsada, returning to his headquarters only on 20 April.

There is little doubt that it was primarily because of such extensive tours across India that Marshall could grasp the crucial archaeological issues and problems relating to both its sites and monuments and organizational details relating to various circles and their staffs. A question may, however, be posed. Which of his manifold duties was Marshall performing during these surveys?

The duties of India's director of archaeology were several and had been outlined by Curzon much before the post itself had been revived. On 8 February 1900, he wrote to Lord Reay that the functions of the trained expert who he would try to get appointed would be (*Indian Archaeology*: 1): '. . . to surpervise archaeological operations throughout India, visiting and advising the local officers

and surveyors; and to supplement the grants made by the Local Governments in cases of extreme urgency or importance, by donations from Imperial funds.' What the supervision of 'archaeological operations throughout India' involved was not spelled out, though, just a day before the above-quoted letter was penned, in his address to the Asiatic Society of Bengal (reproduced in Raleigh 1906: 182–94), Curzon had outlined an ambitious, comprehensive agenda: '. . . It is, in my judgment, equally our duty to dig and discover, to classify, reproduce, and describe, to copy and decipher, and to cherish and conserve' (p. 186). Theoretically speaking, this is what the new director general was expected to do and these were also the parameters within which he himself formally defined his duties (see Marshall 1904: 10–11). Marshall's subsequent review of his early years, however, suggests something different from what he may have stated officially. While recognizing that the viceroy's agenda of research, preservation, excavation, and epigraphy 'in truth were ideals generous enough to warm the heart of any archaeologist with such a vast and wonderful field as India before him', in actuality, if all that Curzon had envisaged was to be achieved it would have required much more money and a far larger body of workers than were then available: '. . . it is one thing to lay down a policy, another to provide the means in men and money for making it practicable' (Marshall 1939: 13–14).

In fact, a close examination of the early surveys reveals that Marshall was mainly involved in work related to archaeological conservation and restoration. As he himself pointed out, in connection with his summer tour programme of 1902: 'The tour is planned almost exclusively with a view to supervising or setting on foot the measures of restorations on the buildings.'[35] At practically all places, whether it was Lahore, Agra or Delhi, or the Central Provinces monuments of Dhar and Mandu, or even the Tower of Fame at Chittor, he was either supervising conservation work, a great deal of which involved following up Curzon's written notes and instructions, or advising local authorities on it. It was only in the North West Frontier Province that the primary task was excavation. During his first visit there, after examining several sites

including Taxila, he recommended Charsada as being the most promising and in the following year, he joined J.Ph. Vogel in excavating there.

The Viceroy's Conservation Agenda

Since discharging Curzon's ambitious programme of conservation provides the frame for contextualizing most of Marshall's early archaeological work, it is necessary to understand the viceroy's agenda. One can then appreciate what was involved in the conservation and restoration work of some of the most important subcontinental monuments, with Marshall serving as Curzon's right-hand man.

The natural and human factors involved in the despoliation of Indian monuments were several: exuberant vegetation; illegal and unscientific excavation; indigenous as also British destruction and conversion of archaeological structures into offices and residences; lack of responsibility and of systems, financial and supervisory, at the imperial and provincial levels. The era of 'vandalism' inaugurated by the early phase of British rule in India, however, was singled out by Curzon as being the most recent and widespread context of such despoliation. The structural and functional metamorphosis of many of India's magnificent medieval monuments into dingy governmental spaces has, in fact, been vividly captured in many of his communications. In Lahore alone, without any apparent sense of incongruity, the Diwan i-Am was serving as a hot-weather dormitory for British soldiers while Moti Masjid was a currency reserve treasury, the Choti Khwabgah a church, Anarkali's tomb the Civil Secretariat record room-cum-library, and the Dai Anga Masjid (also called the 'Railway Mosque') the railway traffic superintendent's office (for details, see *Indian Archaeology*: 421–41). Pillaging and destruction was, admittedly, not new to Lahore. The inlay work from Jahangir's tomb had been picked out by the Durranis while Ranjit Singh had apparently removed its marble pillars and fretwork for the purpose of decorating the Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) and the Ram Bagh at Amritsar. But, as the viceroy took great pains

to point out, the race presently ruling India was superior to such native rulers: 'Whereas vandalism was congenital in them (the Sikhs), it is, I think, unpardonable in us' (ibid.: 420). This theme of linking monument destruction by Indians to genetic defects while British colonial desecration of the same was merely uncultured behaviour, with all its racist overtones, will be touched upon later. From the perspective of viceregal policy, however, it seems that monuments needed to be restored not merely because he had declared them to be 'the most beautiful and perfect collection of monuments in the world' (ibid.: 1) but because this would 'atone for a century of British vandalism and crime' (ibid.: 421) as would behove the later, more cultured, image of British rule in India.

Along with making the restoration of monuments an essential aspect of imperial beneficence, Curzon tried to make two further statements. The very enterprise of restoring historic buildings was to be one in which initiative was to come from the imperial government: 'The Government of India, and not the Provincial Governments, will always be held in the judgment of the civilised world primarily responsible for maintaining intact this great inheritance' (ibid.: 5). Its sustenance also could not in any possible way be provided by the alternative that his predecessor, Elgin, had warmly welcomed a European association overseeing an 'Indian Exploration Fund' for subcontinental archaeology.[36]

Curzon's lack of enthusiasm for that proposal was because of his belief that continental scholars and travellers, as in the past, would use the opportunity to loot Indian antiquities for enriching the collections at the Louvre and the Royal Museum for Ethnography, Berlin. This was a widely shared sentiment. In a confidential letter, James Burgess in 1900 had complained about French vandalism in the Gandhara region: 'The British Museum possesses very few Gandhara sculptures, mostly presented by private individuals; at Paris I hear about a hundred pieces representative of early Buddhist art from Swat and Yusufzai are to be exhibited—all brought home by a French traveller quite recently.'[37] He also used this letter to draw attention to a case of German 'banditry' in Pagan, where Thomann Gillis had removed, slab by slab, the fresco paintings of the Theinmazi Pagoda and had tried to sell them to the

Ethnological Museum of Berlin. Subsequently, at the instance of the Indian government, this case of despoliation was taken up by the British ambassador to Berlin to whom the German government admitted that Gillis had indeed offered for sale to the Ethnological Section of the Royal Museum for Ethnography a collection of objects from Burma, including the frescoes mentioned by Burgess, but 'owing to the disproportionate amount of the price asked for, the offer was not accepted.'[38]

So, in Curzon's scheme of things, archaeological work in India was a British responsibility, to be discharged by its imperial government, with no space for other European nationals. It is singularly interesting, and in sharp contrast to later attitudes, that Orientalists, especially of the continental kind, were never his point of reference. In the very year that Marshall came to India, Curzon had firmly resisted all lobbying by the Burma government and the Revenue and Agriculture Department to provide money for an exhibition at Hanoi in connection with the International Congress of Orientalists to be held there and depute Taw Sein Kho, government archaeologist in Burma, for it. As he put it: 'there was not the smallest justification of spending a rupee of the Indian Taxpayer's money upon an exhibition there! . . . I similarly regard it as the greatest nonsense to send Mr. Taw Sein Kho to the so-called Congress of Orientalists there.'[39] Even at the end of his tenure, in November 1905, in recommending the proposal of granting permanence to the Archaeological Survey and expanding its strength by recruiting scholars from Europe, he continued to underline the necessity of safeguarding British interest: 'the new European officers whom it will be necessary to recruit should, if possible, be natural-born British subjects. It is true that in the case of the Frontier Circle the gentleman whose name we have brought to your notice is an American, but we are inclined to think that the objections to the employment of foreigners do not apply with full force to the appointment of Americans.'[40]

To these ideas, Curzon added yet another perspective. While British interest *vis-à-vis* Indian archaeology was to be jealously safeguarded, this would not give them the automatic right to cart away antiquities and sculptures to the home country. Instead, relics

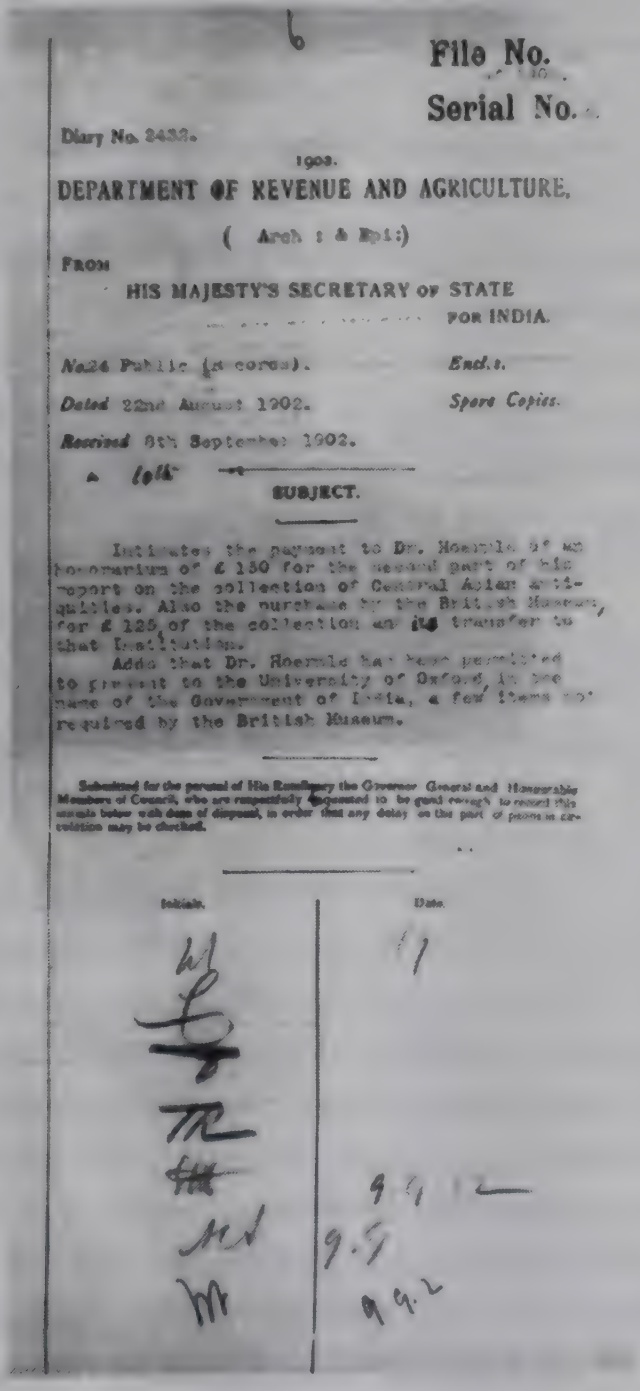
of archaeological and historical value were to be conserved in British India. Cultural plunder, in some cases, could even be returned by the home country.[41] It was, after all, at the Viceroy's initiative that the *pietra dura* panels which today form the backdrop to Shah Jahan's throne in the Diwan-i-Am in the Red Fort, Delhi, had been brought back from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and successfully restored in their original place.[42]

This was a perspective which also led to tensions of various kinds. On the one hand, the Government of Madras was clearly unhappy because it was forced by the viceroy to go back on its commitment to give the Buddhist relics discovered at Bhattiprolu to the king of Thailand.[43] On the other hand, this was seen as encroaching on what were considered by some as the legitimate rights of the British Museum in London. On the question of the proposal to give the archaeological collections that Aurel Stein had made in Chinese Turkestan in their entirety to the British Museum, the viceroy's suggestion to keep a major portion of this at the museums in Calcutta and Lahore was strongly opposed. Curzon, however, stuck to his original proposal and his note on this clearly underlines why he wished to reassert the Government of India's control over the Indian heritage (*Indian Archaeology*: 61–2):

> We shall never get a really representative collection in India if the British Museum argument is steadily and logically applied. Our object should be to persuade scholars to come out here, and to study our treasures and relics in India, instead of allowing them to be swamped in the overstocked collections of the British Museum . . . The answer to the second question, why should our Indian Museum have the first claim on archaeological finds in Chinese Turkestan, seems to me to be equally simple. It was because they were found with our money and our man.[44]

It is not that Curzon always got his way. Antiquities continued to find their way to the British Museum and other such institutions, even with his knowledge (Fig. 11.2). Clearly, vested interests of various kinds blocked what was a crucial departure in notions of colonial heritage from getting as successfully deployed as was desired by the viceroy.

These, then, very broadly, are the ways in which Curzon visualized his conservationist mission. How was this project, in actuality, discharged? And in what ways did Curzon guide Marshall who coordinated this task?



File No.

Serial No.

Diary No. 2438.

1902.

DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE AND AGRICULTURE.

(Arch : & Epi:)

FROM

HIS MAJESTY'S SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA.

No.24 Public (Secret). *Encl:s.*

Dated 22nd August 1902. *Spare Copies.*

Received 8th September 1902.

SUBJECT.

Intimates the payment to Dr. Hoernle of an honorarium of £ 150 for the second part of his report on the collection of Central Asian antiquities. Also the purchase by the British Museum, for £ 125 of the collection and its transfer to that Institution.

Adds that Dr. Hoernle has been permitted to present to the University of Oxford, in the name of the Government of India, a few items not required by the British Museum.

Submitted for the perusal of His Excellency the Governor General and Honorable Members of Council, who are respectfully requested to be good enough to record their opinion below with date of disposal, in order that any delay on the part of persons in circulation may be checked.

Initials. Date.

11.2 Public Record No. 24, dated 22 August 1902, intimating that Hoernle's collection of Central Asian antiquities had been purchased by the British Museum while a few items had been presented by him, with permission, to the University of Oxford. Signed by Curzon and his Council, it reveals that in spite of Curzon's attempt to prevent antiquities from moving out of India, they were still reaching museums in England

Understanding the Process of Conservation

The salient features of monument conservation and restoration in the British Raj during the first decade of the twentieth century were outlined by Marshall in a long note that he prepared towards the end of March 1903, 'On the operations and future conduct of the Archaeological Survey'.[45] A subsequent government resolution incorporated some of these features.[46] Important details are also available in Curzon's address (18 March 1904) to the legislative council at Calcutta when the motion for the Ancient Monuments Bill was being discussed.

Because Marshall's office was meant to only advise, these documents underline the centrality of the local surveyors in conservation. Since their primary work was 'to advise upon, assist in and secure the effective preservation of the buildings which it may be decided to preserve',[47] in order to effectively discharge this, a very detailed interpretation of their duties was provided.[48] The principles for undertaking 'legitimate restoration', the role of local museums in conservation, and the desirability of using a cheaper method of documentation in the form of photographs instead of drawings were also strongly underlined.

These details could be recounted at length, and so could those contained in the provisions of the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act of 1904.[49] However, government instructions and resolutions, in the main, provide a theoretical perspective which, in many cases, as this section subsequently shows, was not adhered to. In order to capture the method and manner of conservation, it would be more appropriate to examine the work of upkeep as it actually unfolded.

But first, which monuments came to be conserved in these years? Curzon's address on the Ancient Monuments Bill suggested that it was the duty of the imperial government to restore all 'the great remains or groups of remains with which this country is studded from one end to the other', which he had visited since he assumed charge— 'as a pilgrim at the shrine of beauty I have visited them, but as a priest in the temple of duty have I charged myself with their reverent custody and their studious repair' (Raleigh 1906: 198). Indeed, he did visit and inspect an astoundingly large number

of monuments across the subcontinent where 'detailed instructions were left on his departure extending to such items as cracked plaster and cobwebs on a staircase; at Ajanta he ordered the bats to be driven out of the caves and the insect nests scraped away' (Gilmour 1995: 180) (see Fig. 11.3 for the sketches that accompanied Curzon's communications regarding a few buildings in Agra and Mandu).

At the same time, there were some monuments whose restoration was to be given precedence over others. Curzon's own notings on a Foreign Department file defined their character and certainly reveal a more discriminating system than that suggested in the above-quoted speech:

1) Monuments in British territory have on the whole a prior claim to those in Native States.
2) Monuments that are likely to be visited by large numbers of people have a prior claim to those in out of the way parts.
3) The work of the Archaeological Department must of necessity be spread over a large number of years, we cannot suddenly or quickly repair the neglect or the vandalism of centuries, and make everything right.[50]

Was Marshall's perception different? For him, too, the main priorities 'were the national monuments of the country' (Marshall 1939: 16), mainly in British territory. When he joined as the director, conservation work was already in progress at places like the Lahore fort and the Taj Mahal and, in any case, these did require urgent repair. This category included the major monuments at Agra, Delhi, and Lahore, the Arhai-din-ka Jhompra and Ana Sagar at Ajmer, and the Bijapur series including the Gol Gumbaz. It is not that the princely states were ignored. The Buddhist stupa at Sanchi as also the monuments of the kings of Malwa at Dhar and Mandu were among those that were provided with financial and logistical support by the Archaeological Survey.

However, as work progressed, the director general began to take some initiative in deciding which monuments were to be granted money for conservation out of the special imperial grant for archaeology. It was at his instance that a large sum of money was spent

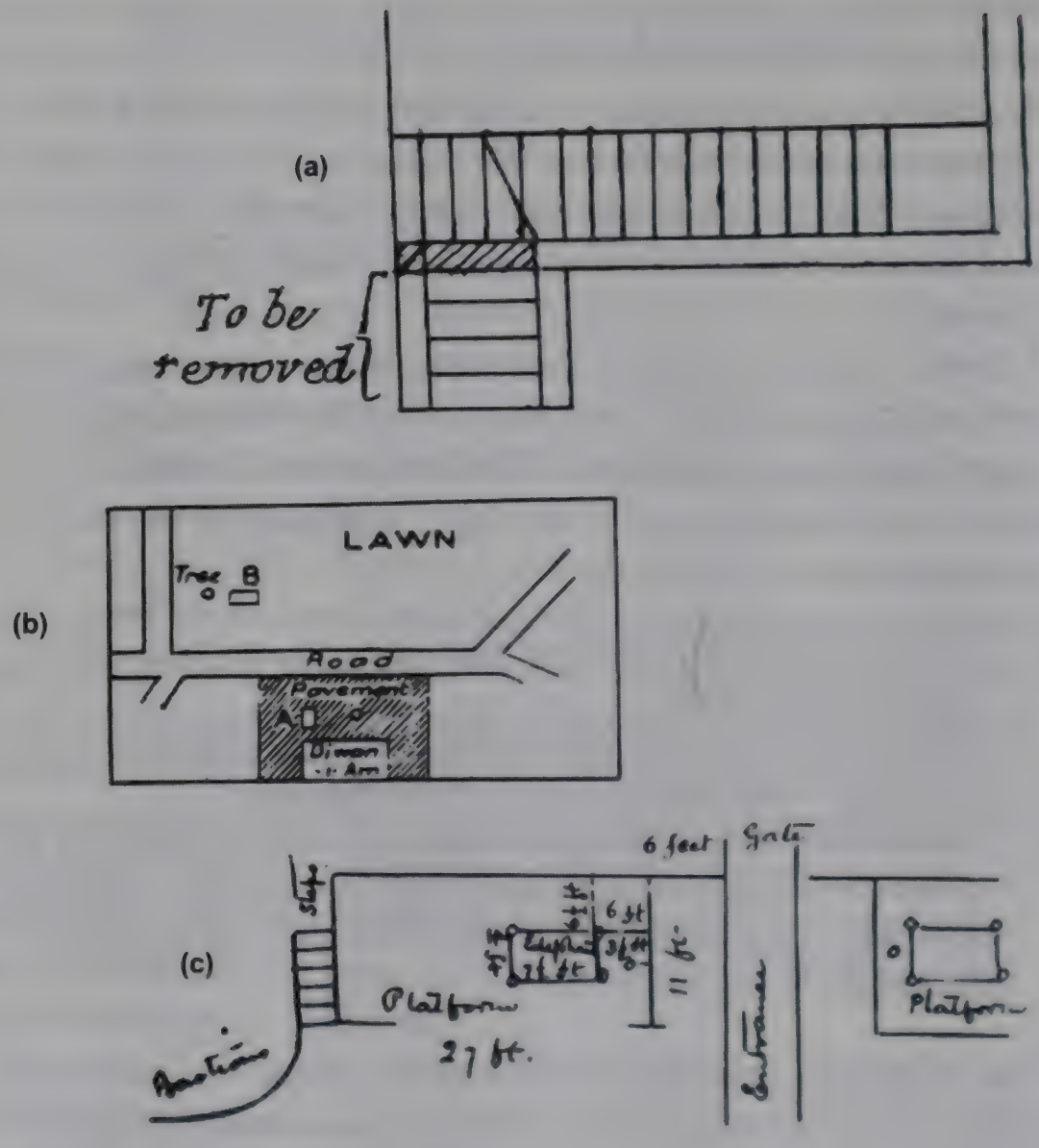


Fig. 11.3: Sketches that accompanied some of Curzon's communications

(a) From the orders given by him at the time of inspecting the Agra monuments on 15 and 16 December 1903. Here, a sketch of the lower steps of Saheli Burj No. 2 in the Taj complex is provided by him to show exactly what needs to be demolished. His note says: 'Remove the lower steps of the staircase at the west end of the houses and build up the end wall so as to enclose the staircase entirely continuing the steps to the ground as shown in the sketch'.

(b) Relates to the Diwan-i-Am in Agra Fort as was sketched by Curzon in a letter to Sir W.M. Colvin, dated 7 April 1905. In this letter, he requested that he be permitted to move the tomb of John Colvin, W.M. Colvin's father, from the pavement in front of the Diwan-i-Am to a place under the shade of 'the best tree in the quadrangle', as Curzon put it. In order to explain the proposed change in location, he enclosed this sketch. While

Curzon did succeed in removing several buildings from the court of the Diwan-i-Am, made by the British at the time when they had converted it into an arsenal and storage place for guns, he did not succeed in getting Colvin's family to agree to shifting their father's tomb.

(c) A sketch of the Hatipol or Elephant Gateway at Mandu, appended by Curzon to his notes on Mandu. Curzon believed that the situation, pose and dimensions of the remnants of the stone elephants at Mandu would throw interesting light on the original position of the stone elephants that once stood outside the Delhi Gate of the Red Fort. As he says in his notes: 'I made a careful study and measurements with a view to assisting the Director General and myself in our proposed restoration at Delhi . . . I append a diagram to make my explanation more clear.'

on the conservation of the Khajuraho temples even though the imperial government believed that the repairs being contemplated were on too lavish a scale. Curzon himself was not very enthusiastic about the Khajuraho temples since they did not fall within British territory nor were they visited very often—'I do not know if visitors are ever attracted to Khajuraho. I should imagine but rarely, though it is possible that the temples may attract Hindu pilgrims.'[51] Notwithstanding these reservations, Marshall forcefully argued for a large outlay on this 'most famous group of Hindu temples in Northern India' and Rs 20,000 was granted for their upkeep in 1905.

More importantly, Marshall attempted to protect places which may not have contained important historic buildings of the type specified by Curzon but were valuable as archaeological sites—the ruins at Takht-i-Bahi and Jamalgarhi in the North West Frontier Province, for instance:

> A comparison of the existing remains with previous accounts shows how rapid has been their decay during the past forty years, and unless further dilapidations are prevented, there is every reason to fear the effacement of these important examples of early Buddhist architecture, of which so few survive in the Frontier Province. The measures asked for are not extensive: they consist in re-setting many of the loose and fallen stones, in protecting the tops of walls, and, if necessary, strengthening them with invisible and inconspicuous cement; and in clearing out the accumulated debris from the courts and passages.[52]

Again, in 1905, after receiving information about ancient megalithic circles in the village of Mangapett (Palwancha taluka, Warangal district) of the Hyderabad Residency, Marshall deputed Henry Cousens of the Bombay Circle of the Survey to follow it up. Subsequently, in his communication to Major Wolsey Haig, the assistant resident at Hyderabad, he underlined the desirability of protecting the prehistoric stone circles from depredation at the hands of *waddars* (professional stonecutters) and peasants.[53]

Grants were made for the upkeep of several minor structures as well sometimes against Marshall's advice. The repair of the tombs of the ancestors of the Nawab of Talpur near Hyderabad in Sind is one such example. In 1903, the Nawab, Mir Rustam Khan II, had applied for a loan of Rs 1,000 to the Bombay government for this purpose along with a request for Rs 1,800 to defray the expenses of the circumcision ceremonies of the Nawab's two sons. Marshall's opinion, which was sought unofficially by the Foreign Department, was negative: 'It would be a mistake, I venture to think, to make any archaeological grant-in-aid, if, as it seems, the family are sufficiently well off to look after their own graves. The money is needed more urgently in other quarters.'[54] Despite Marshall's adverse noting, the grant was sanctioned.

There were other cases like the Talpur tombs in which various government departments overrode the advice of Marshall on matters concerning Indian archaeology. Nevertheless, on the whole, conservation work on a subcontinental scale was successfully executed and one important reason for this was the constant and active interaction that was established between the imperial government and various local authorities, combined with substantial funds for this purpose. That a dialogue with provincial administrators was sorely needed is evident from the ignorance that many British officers displayed on questions relating to archaeology, including someone as important as the governor of Madras. This is evident from a tale recounted by Curzon in a letter (23 April 1902) to George Hamilton, the secretary of state (*Indian Archaeology*: 136):

> To give you an illustration of the way in which archaeology has hitherto been regarded by Local Governments, I may mention that the other day I wrote to Ampthill and asked him to consult Mr. Rea, the Madras Official Archaeologist as to the preservation of an Asoka inscription. He answered that neither the Members of His Council nor his Chief secretary were aware of his existence!

Funds were also made available at the federal and provincial levels. Marshall's department was provided, initially, with an annual outlay of Rs 100,000 for the purpose of giving subsidies to aid special work which was beyond the financial capacity of the local administrations. Additionally, provincial budgets expanded significantly, multiplying sevenfold in a brief span of five years. This is evident from the statistics that Marshall provided in 1904 (*Indian Archaeology*: 24):

	1890–99 Rs	1903–4 Rs
Madras	919	18,542
Bombay	8,285	18,000
Bengal	9,670	44,374
United Provinces	11,530	113,513
Punjab	7,888	40,000
Central Provinces		10,000
Burma	5,000	86,000
Total	43,292	330,429

What was crucial was that many provincial governments were made to assume a financial responsibility which was, in fact, entirely optional. For instance, in 1903, Madras had initially promised only Rs 3,000 for the work of archaeological restoration. Thanks to Curzon's intervention and Marshall's report that Rs 40,000 was necessary just for 'repairs essential to preservation' that woefully inadequate allocation was raised to Rs 18,542 (*Indian Archaeology*: 459).

It may also be mentioned that, because of the close association of the Archaeological Survey in such works, repairs were often satisfactorily completed at a much lower cost than initially envisaged by the public works department of the local governments. The public works department at Ahmedabad, for instance, had estimated that Rs 100,000 would be needed to restore the Sidi Saiyad mosque there whereas the actual cost of the restoration was only Rs 1,680 (*Indian Archaeology*: 193).

There was an amplification in the archaeological outlays for some princely states as well. The historic buildings at Mandu in the Dhar Darbar, for instance, were among those that were extensively repaired. It is not that the Mandu monuments were not maintained prior to 1902. Even when Captain H.H. Cole was the curator of ancient monuments in India in the early 1880s, the Maharaja of Dhar had taken steps to preserve several old buildings including the magnificent tomb of Sultan Hoshang Shah.[55] The difference, however, was in the scale of expenditure. A handwritten statement on the maintenance and repairs of the Mandu ruins shows that Rs 24,547 was spent in the period between 1873 and 1901.[56] In comparison, in the year following Curzon's visit to the Dhar Darbar (1903–4) Marshall's department arranged for a grant-in-aid of Rs 20,000, while in 1904–5, a further grant of Rs 40,000 was sanctioned.[57]

What about the actual work of upkeep and preservation? In several instances, before such work could proceed, the monuments had to be 'set free' for purposes of restoration, that is, they had to be recovered from 'profane or sacrilegious uses' and restituted 'either to the faith of their founders or at least to safe custody as protected monuments' (Raleigh 1906: 200).

This involved, on innumerable occasions, the delicate task of evicting various government offices and establishments from the precincts of the monuments. How this was to be done was generally planned by Curzon and followed up by Marshall. Interestingly, the viceroy's method, while being highly effective, ran completely contrary to the spirit of government resolutions! On paper, the proposed evacuation of the military from medieval monuments in Lahore and Delhi was to be routed through the local governments

which were to initiate a dialogue with military authorities. But, as Curzon put it:

> In practice, I know, *alas* what this means. The Punjab Government were to consult the local/military authorities about evacuating the Moti Masjid and the Choti Khwabgah in the Lahore Fort as far back as April 1899. But 3½ years have elapsed . . . They were similarly to consult the Railway authorities about the Railway Mosque; three years have elapsed and it is not yet evacuated.
>
> I have never been able to get a thing done by the Military authorities through the Local Government without inordinate delay. If ever anything has been done, it has been by going to the Military Department straight and getting them to issue orders e.g. as regards the Shwe Dagon Pagoda at Rangoon, the Fort at Mandalay and other places.[58]

So, Marshall was asked to directly get in touch with Sir E. Barrow to work out the best procedure for clearing the forts at Delhi, Lahore, and Agra. Through such direct intervention, the Archaeological Survey succeeded in getting scores of buildings vacated.

The technicalities of the work itself involved simultaneously coordinating several types of jobs—debris clearance, removal of bad conservation, carefully conserving what had survived, and considerable restoration in several cases. The character of such work can be visualized through the microcosm of the repairs undertaken at Mandu.

As at many other historic sites, Marshall's attention was drawn to Mandu by Lord Curzon who had visited it in 1902:[59]

> From the point of view both of archaeology and of natural grandeur, Mandu impresses me as one of the most remarkable places in India: and I propose at as early a date as possible, to direct the eye and the footsteps of the Director General of Archaeology towards it, since it appears to me that a task here lies before the Government of India in cooperation with the Native Durbar, as worthy and as pressing in its claim as any in any part of India. Indeed an Archaeologist has merely to come to Mandu to find almost every sentiment gratified to which he is prone—the delight of seeing magnificent buildings, of realising that in some cases they are not beyond repair, and of acknowledging that nothing except the want of money stands in the way of restoration.

Subsequently, when Marshall visited Mandu in February 1903, he was equally enthusiastic.[60] Among other things, he found Dhar to be a 'delightful state' and the magnificent Jama Masjid at Mandu reminded him 'of the Doge Palace at Venice; indeed its natural tints are finer'. Notwithstanding such rhapsodic sentiments, he was equally clear about the impossibility of tackling all the buildings and ruins there and proposed to initially take up only three buildings for extensive repairs—the Jama Masjid, Hoshang Shah's tomb, and the mosque of Dilawar Khan.

In the case of a few other structures such as the Hindola Mahal and the Jahaz Mahal, only the clearance of accumulated debris was initially envisaged. The latter palace, situated between two tanks, was apparently used by Jahangir for joyous drunken entertainment (see Patil 1992: 34–5) and, possibly, during his reign a few unaesthetic additions were made to it. At least, Curzon's remarks suggest as much:

> It looked to me as though the pavilion on the terrace projecting into the lake was a Public Works Department restoration or 'improvement' of the time of Jahangir, and that he probably had as much right to complain of the taste of his engineers as the Government of India sometimes have to do in the case of theirs.[61]

Thankfully, since Marshall's department only dismantled the unseemly additions made by the government's own public works department, the above-mentioned Mughal period 'improvements' remained and only debris accumulated from the fallen roofs and walls was cleared. Possibly these were used, as Marshall recommended, for building an enclosure wall which would protect the Jahaz Mahal from encroaching cattle.[62]

The tomb of Hoshang Shah (who ruled Malwa for twenty-seven years during the first half of the fifteenth century) was one of the buildings where substantial conservation work was undertaken. Here, the outer shell of the dome and porch needed immediate and almost complete renewal. A major problem, however, was that of securing adequate marble for repair work if the tomb was to be completely restored in the original material. Marshall believed that a great deal of this stone could be secured from what was lying

around in the heaps of debris near the Tower of Victory and the Jama Masjid, as also that in the courtyard of the tomb.[63] More curious was his suggestion of removing some marble from one part of the Hoshang Shah tomb complex to repair the main building. Apparently, there were some surviving marble slabs on the cupola of the portico on the north of the quadrangle and if this porch had to be repaired in marble, the expenditure would probably have been about a quarter as that of the main tomb.[64] So Marshall felt that instead the marble which remained and which was in a state of dilapidation should be removed and used for the repairs of the tomb proper while the porch could be restored in red limestone and plaster.

In the case of the Jama Masjid, demolition work of some magnitude was required, including that of the southern wall of the masjid and quadrangle which had bulged dangerously and the walls of rubble masonry which had been built into the arches on the east side of the south *takht* (platform) when part of the building was converted into a dwelling house.[65] In addition, fairly extensive conservation and restoration were undertaken in the prayer chamber and the *takhts*. Great stress was laid by Marshall on making the restorations as unobtrusive as possible: 'This masonry must be laid judiciously. It should not present a finished appearance. The mortar or cement should be toned to the colour of the adjoining stone, the joints, should be inconspicuous, and pointing shunned in every instance.'[66] Again, in recommending restoration of the broken or missing jali screens of the prayer chamber, he did not want the ordinary designs found in medieval buildings to be used. He recommended that the engineer first make rough sketches of the surviving portions on the basis of which the reconstructions would be done, in which Marshall hoped to lend a hand.

In this the director was greatly assisted by the very able political agent of the Bhopawar Agency, Captain Ernest Barnes, who shared Marshall's commitment to monuments and his meticulous attention to details. Barnes, the author of the first guide book to Dhar and Mandu (Barnes 1902), scrupulously followed Marshall's suggestions in the work of restoration there. For instance, Marshall's advice about the need to correctly tint mortar led to the exchange

of several letters since Barnes wanted to know exactly how this was to be done. Eventually, the clarifications came from Henry Cousens who informed him that 'some of the red stone broken up and ground to powder would, when mixed with plaster or cement, give a very approximate tint to that of the old work. For a bluish tint lampblack answers very well when well ground in. The matching of colour might be done with those and varied by the mixture of Red or Yellow Ochre as required.'[67] Again, because of the lack of skilled stonemasons in and around Dhar, Barnes successfully arranged to get one head mason and four others from Jaipur. Marshall fully acknowledged this contribution and in his noting on the report from Captain Barnes requesting for an imperial grant-in-aid of Rs 40,000 for continuing the restoration work at Mandu, he strongly argued in favour of such a liberal subsidy because, as he said, '. . . apart from the acknowledged importance, and the urgency of the repairs that have been recommended, the interest taken in the work by the present Political Agent will ensure its being carried through with success.'[68] It was this peculiar conjunction of circumstances at Mandu—reasonable funds, excellent local support from government functionaries and the Dhar Darbar for Marshall's programme of phased conservation, Barnes's deep interest in the work—which, as in many other cases, ensured that restoration was sensitively and successfully executed.

This case also demonstrates that Curzon's view that 'vandalism was congenital' among local rulers reflected his own racial prejudices rather than the ground realities of the Indian situation. Like the Begum of Bhopal and the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Dhar Darbar was actively involved in the conservation of many monuments which had little to do with its personal faith. Among the many structures that this ruling family helped in repairing were the Lat Masjid at Dhar and the Kamal Maula mosque, spending Rs 4,000 in 1903–4 on the former and the same amount on the latter in 1904–5.[69] In fact, in recommending that a reasonable sum be given by the government for the Mandu monuments, Curzon himself had acknowledged that the Dhar state had 'at different times within the past quarter of a century, expended certain sums upon *the upkeep of a possession of which it is intensely proud*' (emphasis added).[70] It is

another matter that various groups that traditionally looked after religious monuments were never seriously incorporated into the monument policy of the British Raj (this aspect is discussed in Chapter 12 of the present volume).

Apart from preserving buildings, conservation also involved securing portable antiquities that were often lying around monuments or in the surrounding countryside. Here, too, steps were taken to secure the preservation of such antiquities at or near some of the major archaeological sites and monuments by instituting small museums there. This was in contrast to the earlier practice of carting antiquities to museums in the major cities (for instance, the Amaravati stones were removed to the Madras Museum). Again, this was at Curzon's initiative and he enunciated his sentiments clearly when the question of removing the collection of archaeological objects at Bijapur was being discussed, Cousens had suggested that the Bijapur objects should form the nucleus of an antiquarian museum for western India which could be situated at Poona while the governor considered that this museum should be based in the Town Hall at Bombay. Curzon, on the other hand, argued against removing them from their original locality (*Indian Archaeology*: 62–6):

> The question raised is one of principle, and it involves a much wider range of application than the limited case of Bijapur. It is the question whether we are to encourage local collections or museums in India, in connection with the localities or neighbourhood where the objects have been found, or whether we should, for the reasons named by Bombay and by Hon'ble Member, centralise in capital cities or larger towns. To my mind there can be little doubt that the former is the sound and the latter the faulty principle . . . where a collection already exists, in connection with a famous group of buildings or remains, that attracts visitors on its own accounts, and represents the architecture or sculpture of a particular epoch or style, then I think it is a great pity to sever these objects from their natural surroundings, in order to add to the size or the symmetry of a central collection.

Several officials were persuaded to start such collections including Sir J. Woodburn at Malda, Colonel Deane at Peshawar, and Sir F. Fryer at Pagan.

Finally, details relating to repair and restoration work were published in the annual reports of the Archaeological Survey of India. Here, too, Curzon advised his young director of archaeology on the manner in which the sensibilities of local governments were to be handled when conservation work was reported in the Survey publications. In September 1902, Marshall wrote his reports on the buildings at Lahore, Delhi, Ajmer, and Agra. Since these were his first reports, he was asked to submit them to the imperial government. This was fortunate, because from the 'Notes' on the relevant file, it seems that Marshall had been harshly critical of some local governments (the Punjab government in particular).[71] His precise comments are not available, since the original reports are untraceable, but their basic tone can be assessed from J.O. Miller's remark who acknowledged that 'it may be true that archaeological work in the Punjab is looked on almost as a jest, and that the Lahore Curator suggested titles which were "pitfalls of ignorance" for the sculpture of his catalogue'![72] However, since printed copies of these reports were meant to be sent to local governments, Miller also advised that 'if he wishes to secure the keen cooperation on the part of others which he himself recognizes is necessary, he should be less captious in his criticisms'. Curzon gave similar advice. While appreciating Marshall's valuable work—'his notes are just what we want—scholarly, artistic and practical'—he suggested that he wanted him to tone down those passages which would offend local sensibilities.[73]

Marshall's laconic comment on the viceroy's suggestion is worth quoting: 'I am glad to have the opportunity of modifying the remarks alluded to, if they are likely to cause any offence. At the time of writing I did not grasp that criticism should not form part of an official report.'[74] The director general's carefully crafted annual reports may have struck many readers as being extraordinarily correct in their tone. Few are aware that these consciously masked as much as they revealed. In order to ensure the successful execution of conservation operations, Marshall could not afford to alienate local authorities by expressing his frank views on their work.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

The bulk of primary sources in the notes were consulted in the National Archives of India, New Delhi. A few of the references, however, are to files in the India Office Records, London.

1. Revenue and Statistics (hereafter R&S) Department, no. 326 of 1901, J.H. Marshall Esqre., 'Agreement for service in India as Director of Archaeology, dated 23 December 1901'.
2. Proceedings of the Department of Revenue and Agriculture (hereafter PRAD) (Archaeology and Epigraphy [hereafter AE]-A), no. 2 of May 1902, letter from T.W. Holderness to the Secretary to the Government of India (Home Department), dated 17 January 1902.
3. PRAD (AE-A), no. 15 of August 1903, Progress Report from the Director General of Archaeology in India from 22 February to 31 March 1902.
4. R&S Department, no. 326 of 1901, letter from John Marshall to Arthur Godley, dated 11 October 1901.
5. Chakrabarti (1988: 56) has cited a statement of M.S. Vats that clearly suggests this: 'Even before coming to India, as far back as 1901, and again in 1906, when he went home to England, Sir John had interested himself in the British Museum seals from Harappa.'
6. R&S Department, no. 953 of 1901, dispatch from Curzon and his Council to George Hamilton, dated 7 March 1901.
7. This letter is contained in PRAD (AE-B), nos. 6/8 of January 1901.
8. PRAD (AE-A), no. 15 of August 1903, Progress Report from the Director General of Archaeology in India from 22 February to 31 March 1902.

9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. *Indian Archaeology*, p. 197, letter from Curzon to George Hamilton, dated 17 April 1902, on Ajanta Caves.
12. PRAD (AE-A), January 1902, letter from J.B. Fuller to the Director General of Archaeology in India, dated 25 March 1902.
13. See Fig. 4 in Lahiri (1997: 137), letter of Marshall to Arthur Godley, dated November 1901.
14. PRAD (AE-B), no. 8 of August 1902, demi-official extract of 10 June 1902. The extract, clearly from a communication of Marshall, reads: 'In the course of conversation yesterday his Excellency intimated that my permanent headquarters would be at Simla, and that after this season I should find accommodation and form an archaeological library in the new buildings. Would you be so kind as to put the first matter on an official basis.'
15. PRAD (AE-B), nos. 3/4 of May 1902, letter from Marshall to the Under Secretary to the Government of India (Department of Revenue and Agriculture), dated 25 April 1902.
16. PRAD (AE-B). nos. 3/6 of October 1902, see 'Notes' section containing summary of communication to Marshall, dated 27 October 1902.
17. PRAD (AE-B), nos. 1/2 of April 1902, letter from Marshall to R.E.V. Arbuthnot, dated March 1902.
18. Part I of the *Annual Report . . . 1903–04* (Marshall 1905: 7).
19. PRAD (AE-B), nos. 1/2 of July 1902, letter from P.C. Mookherji to Marshall, dated 19 June 1902.
20. PRAD (AE-A), no. 34 of September 1903, see 'Notes' section.
21. PRAD (AE-B), nos. 1/2 of July 1902, letter from Marshall to Secretary, Department of Revenue and Agriculture, dated 25 June 1902.
22. PRAD (AE-A), no. 6 of October 1902, letter from R.E.V. Arbuthnot to Director General of Archaeology in India, dated 18 October 1902.
23. PRAD (AE-A), no. 5 of October 1902, letter from Marshall to Under Secretary to the Government of India, dated 1 September 1902.
24. These estimates do not include the salaries of the archaeological surveyors or the director general himself. See PRAD (AE-B), nos. 7/15 of June 1902, statement showing distribution by provinces of the budget grants of the Archaeological Department for 1902–3.
25. PRAD (AE-A), no. 1 of August 1903, note by Marshall to Under Secretary to the Government of India, dated 29 March 1903.
26. PRAD (AE-A), no. 12 of October 1902, letter from Arbuthnot to the Director General of Archaeology in India, dated 29 October 1902.

27. PRAD (AE-A), no. 27 of June 1903, letter from Marshall to Secretary to the Government of India, dated 22 May 1903.
28. PRAD (AE-B), no. 8 of August 1902, extract from demi-official note of Marshall, dated 10 June 1902.
29. PRAD (AE-A), no. 5 of September 1902, letter from J.O. Miller to Marshall, dated 17 September 1902.
30. PRAD (AE-A), no. 12 of August 1903, 'Notes on the operations and future conduct of the Archaeological Survey' by J.H. Marshall, dated 29 March 1903.
31. Ibid.
32. PRAD (AE-B), nos. 7/9 of February 1903, letter of Marshall to Secretary to the Government of India, dated 18 January 1903. Another letter of the same date in this file, also from Vellore, to the above-mentioned person requests sanction for the purchase of Prinsep's book.
33. Marshall, however, did not tour the Bengal and Burma Circles of the Survey.
34. Marshall provided an outline of his various tours during his first year of office in Part I of the *Annual Report of the Director-General of Archaeology for the year 1902–03* (Marshall 1904: 3–8).
35. PRAD (AE-A), no. 7 of August 1902, letter from Marshall to Secretary to the Government of India, dated 11 July 1902.
36. PRAD (AE-A), August 1898, dispatch from Elgin and Council to George Hamilton, dated 14 July 1898.
37. PRAD (AE-A), no. 4 of August 1900, letter from Burgess (marked confidential) to Secretary to the Government of India, dated 5 April 1900.
38. PRAD (AE-A), no. 3 of December 1900, communication from Frank C. Lascelles, Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to Berlin, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, dated 30 July 1900.
39. PRAD (AE-A), nos. 308–12 of August 1902, 'Notes' section, note of Curzon dated 22 June 1902.
40. The American that Curzon was referring to was David Spooner (see *Indian Archaeology*: 42–7).
41. This was entirely consistent with Curzon's sentiments even before he came to India. For instance, Curzon had publicly advocated and had even tried to persuade Gladstone to return the Parthenon marbles to Greece (see Gilmour 1995: 82).
42. PRAD (AE-A), September 1902, dispatch from Curzon and Council to George Hamilton, dated 18 September 1902.

43. Proceedings of the Home Department (hereafter PHD) (Public-A), nos. 186–7 of January 1901. Also PHD (Public-A), nos. 122–3 of March 1901.
44. It is another matter that shortly after Curzon left India Stein suggested that the Central Asian collection be distributed in a way that was heavily weighted in favour of the British Museum. In fact, in response to Stein's letter to the secretary of the Home Department, dated 31 August 1906 (Khotan), Marshall registered a strong protest: (PHD [AE-A], nos. 14–18 of June 1907).

    > I do not feel at all satisfied that Dr. Stein's proposed distribution fulfils the intention of the Government of India's desptach no. 24 of 6 June 1901. It was made quite clear in that despatch that the Indian museums were to have the pick of Dr. Stein's collection, subject to the *proviso* that the interests of research were to receive due consideration. Dr. Stein professes to have done his best, in drawing up his proposals, to give effect to the wishes of the Government, but in reality, when we come to look into his proposals, we find that the British Museum is to take nearly 800 antiquities, including many of the most valuable specimens in the collection, as against 446 to be sent to Calcutta and 186 to Lahore.

45. PRAD (AE-A), no. 12 of August 1903.
46. Ibid., no. 13 of August 1903, resolution of 7 July 1903.
47. Ibid.
48. Section 6 of the Government Resolution noted:

    It should be the duty of the Provincial Archaeological Officer—

    1) To advise on the proposals for conservation or restoration works submitted by the officers of the Public Works Department, and to recommend the order of precedence in which these as well as any works suggested by themselves should be undertaken.
    2) To submit proposals for the conservation or repair of ancient buildings of interest requiring preservation which have come to their own notice during their tours. This work should be carried out *pari passu* with the preparation of the list of remains referred to in the Government of India Circular 12.28, dated 24 August 1891, where these have not yet been completed and should not await their final completion.
    3) To pass plans and estimates for all works of conservation and repair whether suggested by himself or by the Public Works Department. It will not be the duty of the Archaeological officer to criticise

rates, but to approve and advise on the character of the works to be carried out.

4) To assist in the supervision of the works of conservation while they are in progress. The degree of assistance required must depend upon the nature and importance of the work. It will be the duty of the archaeological officer to assist the Engineer with his advice and to bring to the notice of the proper authority any alterations or repairs which in his opinion are likely to affect the architectural or historical interest of the building.

49. This very important piece of legislation has not been discussed in this essay for two reasons. First, Marshall himself had very little to do with its framing and passage and, second, the purpose of this essay is not to discuss how the government wished to preserve monuments but to understand how the work was actually done.
50. Proceedings of the Foreign Department (hereafter PFD) (Internal-A), nos. 49–62 of May 1906, 'Notes' section for Curzon's note, dated 18 April 1905.
51. Ibid.
52. PRAD (AE-A), no. 19 of February 1903, letter from Marshall to the Chief Commissioner, North West Frontier Province, dated 20 December 1902.
53. Hyderabad Residency Records (Political Department), no. 280 of 1904, letter from Marshall to the Assistant Resident at Hyderabad, dated 1 November 1905.
54. PRAD (AE-B), no. 6 of October 1903, extract from unofficial record, dated 1 August 1903.
55. Bhopawar Political Agency Records, no. 4/21/1883, Captain H.H. Cole's notes on 'Mandu in Malwa'.
56. Southern States of Central India and Malwa Agency Records, no. 4/21 (II) of 1903, see 'Statement showing the total amount spent on the maintenance and repairs of the Mandu ruins since 1873'.
57. PRAD (AE-A), nos. 12 and 13 of June 1904, 'Notes-section'.
58. PRAD (AE-A), nos. 32 & 33, 'Notes' section, Curzon's notes, dated 29 October 1902.
59. Southern States of Central India and Malwa Agency Records, no. 4/21/1903 (II), Curzon's note on Mandu.
60. Ibid., Marshall's letter to Captain Ernest Barnes, dated 17 February 1903.
61. Ibid., Curzon's note on Mandu.

62. PRAD (AE-A), no. 3 of July 1903, John Marshall's 'Notes on the Conservation of Monuments at Dhar and Mandu', dated 11 May 1903.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. Southern States of Central India and Malwa Agency Records, no. 4/21/1903 (II), letter from Cousens, dated 4 August 1903.
68. PRAD (AE-A), nos. 12–13, 'Notes' section, see Marshall's note dated 10 February 1904.
69. Ibid., letter from Captain E. Barnes to the First Assistant to the Agent to the Governor General in Central India, dated 30 December 1903.
70. Southern States of Central India and Malwa Agency Records, no. 4/21/1903 (II), Curzon's note on Mandu.
71. PRAD (AE-A), nos. 32 and 33 of February 1903, 'Notes' section.
72. Ibid., J.O. Miller's remarks of 12 October 1902.
73. Ibid., Curzon's notes of 29 October 1902.
74. Ibid., Marshall's remarks of 3 November 1902.

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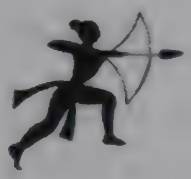
12

Marshall's Coming to Grips with India's Past and its 'Living Present'



Introduction

RESCUING MONUMENTS FROM VEGETATION, TIME, and 'vandalism', especially that inaugurated by the early phase of British rule in India, this was John Marshall's main brief during the viceroyalty of George Nathaniel Curzon. In such matters, Curzon functioned not just as the viceroy of India but also as Marshall's guru and guide. Chapter 11 was primarily concerned with that aspect of the director general of archaeology's apprenticeship (Lahiri 1998).

But the story of Marshall's early years does not end with these monument-repairing activities. Whenever conservation work allowed him the leisure, he moved across the terrain, taking in sites from Charsada to Rajagriha, animatedly formulating the implications of new discoveries for the edifice of the Indian past. This had to be more appropriately documented and presented, both in museums and through publications, and a great deal of Marshall's

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Fig. 12.1: John Marshall, before he sailed to India in 1902

time and correspondence is concerned with ways of achieving this end. The Indian past was also part of the living present of its inhabitants and impinged on the Archaeological Survey of India's activities in various ways. This essay tries to understand that world of contestation and interaction.

Archaeological work within a colonial context embodied a variety of interpersonal relations as well. I therefore ask the question: for

the man who is the subject of this essay, were human beings essentially the same or different? Marshall's letters and communications are cluttered with references to the differences between Britishers, European 'foreigners', and Indians, and such perceptions, in some ways, influenced the character of the Survey that he headed. This, too, forms an integral part of the story of his teething years.

From Charsada to Bahrain

In a widely quoted passage from an assessment that was made by him in 1915 as part of the quinquennial review of the Archaeological Survey, John Marshall described its research aim in his early years:

> From the time of its re-organisation in 1902, it has been the design of the Department to take in hand the excavation of the great buried cities of antiquity; but before this design could be carried out, it was deemed advisable to re-examine some of the Buddhist sites which had already been partially uncovered, in order to coordinate the results obtained by earlier excavators and to check the often unreliable conclusions which they had drawn.[1]

Many times in the future also Marshall presented the excavations undertaken at the outset of his tenure as forming part of a conscious strategy that was concerned with Buddhist sites. There, he was expected to introduce 'the scientific methods of digging which had yielded such brilliant results in Greece and Crete' and which formed one of the main reasons for his appointment as director general of archaeology in India (Marshall 1939: 23). This self-assessment is interrogated at some length here, largely on the basis of the archival material that has been exhumed from the files of his own office.

But first it is necessary to point out that, in the first decade of the twentieth century, exploration and excavation were by no means a priority of the department that John Marshall headed—that Rs 5,000 was spent on excavations during his first year, a mere 5 per cent of the archaeological budget, reflects this. Marshall seemed to be quite concerned about remedying the lack of government support, partly by encouraging private societies to excavate. The

International Indian Exploration Fund had been inaugurated in Europe in 1898 and Marshall believed that if excavations by such an international body became practicable, the Survey would be content to let much of this work rest in its hands.[2] His mentor, however, did not support these views. 'The last thing that we want is the continental enthusiast with a spade in his hand. Let us excavate our own sites' was Curzon's response to this suggestion.

Marshall, of course, had his own reasons, as he explained, for supporting that Fund. He was thinking of D.G. Hogarth, director of the British School of Archaeology at Athens, under whom he had trained, 'probably the cleverest explorer of the day—whose ambition for many years has been to get an opportunity of digging on the north west frontier'.[3] Curzon also expressed a desire to see Hogarth in India, but believed that he was not the kind of man the International Indian Exploration Fund originally had in mind for working in India. It transpired that Hogarth never did excavate in India, nor did the Fund take off. In 1915, the £217 in its credit, collected from subscribers long ago, was given to Marshall by the Royal Asiatic Society, at the suggestion of Vincent Smith, for trial excavations at Nalanda.[4]

It may also be emphasized that, while this section concerns itself with the Survey, the archaeological research arena in India was not synonymous with its work. There were, as in the past, sundry characters who were not archaeologists but explored and excavated all kinds of sites and antiquities. Some were travellers with archaeological predilections. Kazui Otani, a Japanese savant, had travelled from England to India via Central Asia and the Kilik Pass in search of Buddhist sites.[5] Armed with a letter from Curzon's private secretary, he obtained permission to explore Rajagriha and surrounding areas in Bihar.

More common were officials who in the course of their duties tried to solve different kinds of archaeological mysteries. Hughes Buller, about whom a great deal will be said later, was one of them. As superintendent of the Imperial Gazetteer in Baluchistan, he used his tours to collect pottery and beads (of pottery, shell, amber, glass, and agate) from Baluchi *tumuli*, inscriptions in the Cuphic script, and terracotta figurines.[6] Buller also regularly corresponded

with different people about these antiquities and one of them was the grand old man of Indian prehistory, Robert Bruce Foote.[7] Foote thought that the ceramic material from Baluchistan might resemble Egyptian pottery and asked Buller to get in touch with Flinders Petrie. Then, there was Leonard Munn, a prospector in the Nizam's Dominions Prospecting Syndicate, who, in course of examining copper workings, found the remains of 'ruined villages' on the top of hills around the villages of Chintrala Imaram and Adlur.[8] An interesting description of these villages is available along with that of the graveyards near the sites and the excavation that he conducted at one of them. For Munn, his archaeological work was perfectly logical since he associated the old workings that he was prospecting with these dwellings.

So, the place of the Archaeological Survey in the small world of Indian archaeology was not exclusive. Nor, as the following underlines, were the sites to be excavated or the timing of work always decided by Marshall.

In the Shadow of the Buddha

John Marshall came to Buddhist sites with a view to changing what may be called the idol-digger method, vigorously pursued in nineteenth-century India, and which had lately been the subject of a great deal of criticism in Europe. Though Buddhist sites had been an early focus of British interest, they had more often than not been used as a source of sculptures rather than as a means for understanding their evolution and history. Even Alexander Cunningham, who had been enormously successful in identifying and mapping such sites, is known to have removed images and objects with impunity, without even an elementary recording of their locations within the excavated areas. As James Burgess, with whom Marshall shared a close correspondence, put it:

> If Dr. Vogel or anyone else excavates on the frontier, I do hope he will know something better than the disastrous methods of Cole, Cunningham, Carlleyle and Beglar . . . The excavation should be

> secondary to the daily survey and record of observations of position of every fragment before it is moved, and the preservation of every chip in its relation to the others. By such a process only can we learn what a site can really tell us.[9]

Charsada is the first area where fieldwork under Marshall's planning was undertaken. The necessity of excavating in the Frontier Province had been articulated by J.Ph. Vogel in a 'Memorandum on the Preservation of Archaeological Material in the Peshawar District' dated May 1902. Vogel mentioned a large number of *dheris* (mounds) which could be excavated and felt that at any of them 'even a few months' excavations would yield more results to science than the many past years of desultory idol-digging'.

The director's first winter tour in India began in the Frontier Province. That terrain and its buried cities were alive with Classical antecedents, a world that Marshall, fresh from archaeological excavations in Greece, was familiar with (Marshall 1951: xv). After surveying the area around Peshawar and Rawalpindi with Vogel, seeing Taxila for the first time, Marshall decided on Charsada as the venue of his first excavation. Work began there towards the end of February 1903, but without the director general of archaeology. Marshall was then touring western India, following up Curzon's instructions regarding conservation measures there. Thus Vogel supervised the first weeks of excavation at Charsada. He was undertaking an excavation for the first time in his career and, obviously, was nervous about his maiden project. 'I must tell you that you are seriously wanted here. I have never done any excavation before and am simply going on digging in my own stupid way', he wrote to Marshall.[10] The latter, though, was kept informed about the work as it proceeded. Vogel's description of his first two weeks there makes irresistible reading:

> You will be anxious to hear how the excavations are going on. Great discoveries have not been made yet but a certain number of small objects come to light regularly such as terracottas, lamps, pottery and beads. Yesterday a piece of Gandhara sculpture was found, which would point to the existence of a temple or *stupa* inside the Fort, and two coins one Hindu and one Muhammadan.

> We have started now digging pits of 12 x 8 yards and about 6 feet deep from three corners of the Hisar and continue so along the edges. Each of the parties will have to make a dozen of such pits in order to finish the whole outline of the Fort. Here and there walls have been found which have been preserved for your inspection.
>
> There are three gangs each of thirty men under a jamadar at work now, at a pay of Rs 2-each a week (the jamadar gets Rs 3). This is considered a very good pay and there is no difficulty in procuring as many men as we want.
>
> They work with real enthusiasm encouraged by their jamadars with the war cry 'Shabash Imandars!' as if the object was a religious one instead of revealing the remnants of despised idolaters.
>
> At the same time they work far more carefully than I had anticipated as appears from the fact that many objects like beads do not escape their notice. This is undoubtedly due to the reward system, which is very popular with them. One wonders how much material must have been lost at previous excavations, when no rewards were given and consequently any small objects were thrown away . . .[11]

Vogel's own circle was only partially equipped to handle the excavations. Neither of his two draughtsmen knew how to prepare site maps, and so the services of the director's draughtsman—Bhairon Baksh—had been requisitioned to produce the necessary maps. Marshall joined the excavations towards the end of March and remained there for a month.

Four mounds were opened up during March and April—Bala Hisar, the most conspicuous mound of the area, as also Mir Ziyarat, Palatu, and Ghaz Dheris (Marshall and Vogel 1990). Several structural features relating to them came to be better understood. For instance, Bala Hisar was shown to be a fortified acropolis, while at Mir Ziyarat, instead of a stupa, remains of dwelling structures were unearthed. Palatu Dheri yielded a vihara, which had originally had a superstructure of wood, while Ghaz Dheri contained a relic-bearing stupa base. Various types of antiquities were excavated including inscriptions, sculpture, beads, coins, and metal objects, though they were not described in relation to the trenches from where they were unearthed. In classifying the structural remains

and minor finds at Bala Hisar, a curious twofold division was adopted: 'Muhammadan' and 'pre-Muhammadan'. With the exception of coins, 'Muhammadan' artefacts were not described.

It may be asked if it was in order to have excavated such an imposing mound for just two months. Work there failed to proceed beyond the first season not because Vogel or Marshall decided against it. Rather, this is connected with Aurel Stein's appointment in 1903 as superintendent of the Frontier Circle. From 1903 he held a dual post, and apart from his archaeological duties he was also the inspector general of education there. The director's relationship with this particular archaeological superintendent could not have begun on a particularly optimistic note since, even though Vogel enjoyed Marshall's unstinted support, he was, after Stein's appointment, not permitted to continue his work at Charsada. All that Marshall could do was articulate his disappointment:

> It is a matter for considerable regret that the local Governments in the Frontier Province and Punjab could not see their way to allowing Dr. Vogel to continue his work of exploration at Charsada after Dr. Stein's appointment. One of the most frequent complaints against our survey by European scholars has been that excavations have been started in a variety of places, but almost invariably abandoned before they were half completed, and it is highly desirable that we should avoid giving grounds for a repetition of this complaint. Even had Dr. Stein shown the disposition to continue work begun by Dr. Vogel, he does not possess the necessary experience of the site to explore it so effectually as the latter could do.[12]

Then there was Kasia, identified by Cunningham with Kusinagara, the place where the Buddha had attained *nirvana*. There, the decision to dig had a great deal to do with a memorial from the Burmese Buddhists of Calcutta for a plot of land. This request was made in January 1903, and by September Marshall seems to have realized that the proposed land ought to be reported from an archaeological point of view before it was handed over.[13] Even before this, in 1901, the United Provinces government had decided that Ghulam Rasool Beg, head draughtsman to the archaeological surveyor, would undertake work at Kasia, supervised by E.W. Smith.

But the field operations had to be postponed because of Smith's death.[14] Under the new circumstances, Marshall chose Vogel to undertake excavations. Vogel found Kasia to be far more satisfactory than Charsada, since here there were many ancient buildings that had survived. Excavations began on 28 November 1904 and, with a Christmas recess, continued uninterruptedly till November 1905.

A more spectacular Buddhist site was Sarnath, the scene of the Buddha's first sermon. Sarnath was excavated by F.O. Oertel, a United Provinces Public Works Department man, and the first season there (early 1905), was especially momentous. This was because Oertel in early March discovered an Ashokan pillar, in fragments, and its magnificent crowning capital. There are two telegrams from him that capture that exciting moment. 'Discovered round inscribed column 25 inches in diameter 9 lines probably Asoka characters',[15] is how Oertel first informed Marshall. This was followed on the next day by another one: 'Found persepolitan capital of column surmounted by 4 lions. Excellent preservation, height 7½ feet shaft 22½ total 30 feet above plinth.'[16] A great deal else was also discovered, and an account of the inscriptions, structural edifices, and antiquities was published in the 1904–5 report of the Survey (Oertel 1990). His discoveries there so impressed Marshall that he recommended in 1905, with Lord Curzon's agreement, that a very favourable reference to Oertel's work be made by the imperial government.[17]

To come back to the initial question—was the Sarnath work part of Marshall's plan to open out Buddhist sites? The 1905 communications are silent on this, though the note which recommended that the Sarnath operations be commended does not give the impression that it was Oertel's idea: 'The work at Sarnath which I instituted myself last year, has been under the immediate superintendence of Mr P.O. Oertel.'[18] A couple of years later, however, by which time there was a great deal of friction between them, Oertel gave the impression that Marshall had not suitably acknowledged his contribution. The reasons for this friction were several. They ranged from Marshall's decision to add a dissenting note regarding Oertel's hypothesis about the Dhamekh stupa in the annual report

of the Survey to Oertel's transfer to Agra, which precluded him from continuing his work at Sarnath.[19] Simultaneously, Marshall's department was also being accused by C.M. Mulvany, professor of philosophy at Queen's College, Benares, of trying to rob Oertel of the kudos of his discoveries at Sarnath.[20]

Marshall was first profoundly offended, and then he wrote to Oertel. In response to Marshall's letter, Oertel explicitly pointed out:

> Apparently you claim that you first conceived the idea and entrusted the work to me . . . not in accordance with facts . . . I had known the site intimately and studied it for years, before I came to the conclusion that valuable relics might still be found in certain places. I spoke to you about excavating there when we were at Buddh Gaya together and got your approval. The subsequent excavations were entirely my work. I selected the places and directed operations. Whatever success attended my work is entirely due to me; although I could not have done it without your approval and the financial assistance of the supreme and local Governments.[21]

Marshall also acknowledged this.[22] He, however, felt that nothing he had ever said or written could convey any other impression: 'So far as execution of the work, also, is concerned, I have acknowledged in a dozen places or more the full credit that is due to you.'[23]

The Amaravati field investigations, begun just before Marshall left on furlough, were also not undertaken at his initiative. Alexander Rea, Marshall's superintendent in the Madras and Coorg Circle, initiated this phase of work at what was undoubtedly one of the most important Buddhist 'monument' sites of peninsular India, yet a decimated one. By this time, in fact, nothing of the stupa remained. However, Rea who had already conducted excavations there in 1888–9, believed that despite the whole-scale depredation that it had suffered, the site could still yield useful information about the stupa complex: 'Many people thought that this place was "played out" but I think I have a better knowledge of it than anyone excepting Dr. B., and I am certain that the place still

contains possibilities of something yet to be discovered.'[24] Rea recovered several marble statues, sculpted panels, and railing pieces around the place where the great stupa stood, and showed that the original ground level there was several feet below the *pradakshina* (Rea 1990: 118). Additionally, two dozen inscriptions, bases of gate piers *in situ*, several hundred Andhra coins, a lot of pottery, as also a cartload of neolithic stone implements were collected! As he says, they were 'partly from the stupa, but largely from the fields surrounding, which were evidently, in early times occupied by a large town'.

Other Sites and Ideas

As one moves beyond Buddhist remains, the Indian archaeological arena becomes much more exciting. In his formative years in India, it is not Buddhist complexes but the world outside them and Marshall's ideas in relation to such sites that seem to offer greater insights into his instincts, wherever they took him, about the Indian past.

Ancient cities fascinated Marshall and, initially, he seems to have considered exploring both Kausambi and Ujjain. As early as September 1902, he sent P.C. Mukherjee there. The latter collected antiquities and produced brief reports of his surveys. Mukherjee stayed at Ujjain for about a month, and while his notes are not particularly detailed, there is a map showing the general topography and the position of the mounds. Marshall, however, did not dig at Ujjain, and many years later explained why he avoided touching it: 'I once went carefully over that site with a view to possible excavation and I have no hesitation in saying that it is one of the very last places in India which we ought to tackle, for the reason that the medieval and later deposits coupled with the vastness of the site, are such as to make the cost of digging prohibitive.'[25]

Basarh in Bihar is another city site that was excavated (in 1903–4). But Theodor Bloch's trial digging at the mound called Raja Bisal ka Garh was due to the interest of the lieutenant governor of Bengal, who was particularly keen on systematic exploration of Buddhist remains in Bihar.[26] Of course, the buildings and objects

revealed in Bloch's work turned out to be of a secular nature, the most spectacular find being a hoard of about seven hundred clay seals of the Gupta period (Bloch 1990).

Rajagriha was the urban complex about which Marshall was most optimistic. 'I visited by the way the ancient site at Rajagriha a week or two ago and was immensely struck by the opportunities it offers for excavation', he wrote to Burgess shortly after surveying it towards the end of 1904.[27] 'I propose to commence operations there myself next winter and shall be surprised if we do not find something to show for our trouble. It is certainly the most promising buried site that I have seen in India.' Although digging began there much later (early 1905, to be precise), by March 1904 Marshall was already working out the logistics of excavation work. The letter that is reproduced below was written by him to the collector of the Patna division. It draws attention to the logistical details that had to be considered while excavating nearly a hundred years ago:

> I am arranging with the Bengal government to carry out some excavations at the ancient site of Rajagriha in January and February next, and I should be very grateful if you could give me some information regarding local conditions.
>
> First, as to labour, I shall want some 200 or 300 coolies—men who can use a spade or pickaxe. Shall we have any difficulty in procuring them locally at that time of the year and what is a fair price to give them?
>
> Then as regards camping arrangements. Can I procure necessary furniture for tents, such as crockery and the like from Bihar or any place moderately near to Rajgir? Which is the nearest place from which I can get bread, meat and vegetables? And should I have difficulty in getting cow's milk on the spot, or would it be necessary to bring a cow from some distance?
>
> Lastly as to conveyance—could you tell me if I can hire a tonga cart and ponies anywhere in the neighbourhood of Bihar or Patna for 7 or 8 weeks. I have very vivid recollections of the tikka gharries between Bihar and Rajgir, and should be very glad if I could find some other means of conveyance. While I am excavating old and new Rajagriha I

> propose to make a careful survey of the environs, and particularly of the valley approaching old Rajagriha from the north, which has never yet been explored. For this purpose I shall need to borrow a couple of elephants for a few days. Are there any zamindars in the district who could lend them?

For Marshall, a graphic representation of this historic fortified urban landscape was as important as the excavations. By enlisting the services of J. Wilson (a Survey of India man), an impressive map of Rajagriha was made, the most detailed to date, covering not only the 35 square miles that formed part of this site but also the valleys and hill ranges as far east as Giriak. As for the excavations, there is no doubt that part of Marshall's interest in Rajagriha was related to its intimate connections with Buddhism. In the digging done by Daya Ram Sahni among the ruins buried south of the Karanda tank, bases of small masonry stupas were unearthed, 'a certain sign that it was a Buddhist site', Bloch assured Marshall.[28] However, the most interesting and unexpected discovery there related to Hindu worship. This was found by Bloch from below the Maniyar Math, in the centre of old Rajagriha.[29] It consisted of a unique and massive concentric masonry structure, with stucco panels around it depicting Nagas, Siva, Ganesha, Banasura, and a garlanded linga. Ironically, at a time when so much attention was given to conservation, these singular stuccos remained inadequately protected. Within a decade of their discovery, they had been seriously disfigured.

If the urban world of ancient India was one aspect which enthused Marshall, his initiative is also writ large on the canvass of those shadowy centuries that preceded the birth of Indian cities. This is evident in the way in which he sought out and tried to follow up a few archaeological leads in three different contexts—the Ganga–Yamuna *doab*, Baluchistan, and Bahrain.

In 1903, Marshall deputed Pandit Hirananda on an exploration tour in the *doab* to locate the sites that had yielded copper-based (presently known as 'hoard') objects.[30] During the course of that tour, Hirananda visited Rajpur Parasu, Bithur, and Pariar—

evidently, he was asked to visit these sites because Marshall was trying to collect archaeological information about a 'bronze age' which, he believed, could be correlated with the early Vedic Age. One may surmise this on the basis of a letter written by the director to the secretary of the Revenue and Agriculture Department, well before the survey (21 March 1903). As the letter reveals, Marshall was concerned that there was very little information about the provenance of such objects in the rich holdings of various museums in India.

> To give you a single example: 1 have, I believe, collected sufficient literary and philological evidence to prove that the early Vedic Age was of bronze and not of iron, as has hitherto been supposed. It is of some importance, having backed up my conclusions by the evidence of existing antiquities, to correct the impossible anachronisms perpetrated in previous translations of the Rig Veda, and of still more importance to know that—assuming the existence of a bronze age at that period in India—the recovery of its monuments will present no insuperable difficulties. I have naturally been on the look out for implements belonging to an age of bronze and have succeeded in finding specimens in several museums, but without, unfortunately, a single note on the circumstances of their discovery or place of provenance![31]

Around this time, the beginning of the early Vedic 'period', was generally dated to 2000 BC or so, and if his hunch had proved to be correct, Marshall would have been able to push back the antiquity of India's material past to the second millennium BC.

As for Hirananda's findings, at Rajpur Parasu, it seems that the implements had been found years before, when a well was being dug. While there was no pottery on the find-spot, Hirananda collected some pottery from a small *kheda* (mound) adjacent to it. At Bithur, where he obtained some implements along with a brass seal, the objects were found apparently in a part of the Ganga river bed; while at Pariar, apart from the earlier reported objects, there were similar implements in the village that were being treated 'as objects of worship and considered as relics of a fight between Rama's

hosts and sons'![32] Eventually, the survey results were not used at all for the purpose for which Marshall had originally deputed Hirananda. Either Marshall was unsure about publishing his views, or the pressures of his office left him with very little time to put down on paper his ideas about them. Smith (1907), however, subsequently published details of this work.

In the same year that Hirananda explored copper hoard sites, Marshall took his first tentative steps towards visualizing a much earlier historical beginning for Baluchistan than had hitherto been imagined. And the man responsible for training Marshall's eyes on Baluchistan was an ICS officer, Hughes Buller. Compiler of several volumes of the Baluchistan district gazetteer series, Buller, few are aware, thought of himself as a kind of amateur archaeologist, collecting all kinds of artefacts and archaeological information in the course of executing his official duties. In order to ascertain the nature and chronology of his finds, he corresponded with several people all over the country. One of them was Marshall. By 1903, a lively correspondence developed between them. Buller was even persuaded by Marshall to contribute an article on the *gabarbands* of Baluchistan for the annual published by the department (Buller 1990). Marshall's interest in the development of Classical and Persian gems was also whetted by several sources to which he was referred by Buller, including Seistan Arbitration Commission members who had made a fairly large collection of them.

Most relevant, however, were Buller's finds from Nal in Las Bela, on the main route from Makran to Sind via the Mula Pass. On 12 October 1903, Buller wrote to Marshall about 59 bowls which his assistant in the Jhalawan country, Mirza Sher Muhammad, had brought from a mound called Sohr Damb at Nal: '. . . the designs are in red, black and yellow. As far as I can judge, it is much more delicate than anything that is made in Sind even at the present time . . . some of the pots contain earth and bones.'[33] When photographs of the Nal pottery reached Marshall, he immediately declared it to be the most interesting and finest pottery yet procured in India, bearing analogies with Mediterranean forms of 800 BC, and urgently asked for more information.

> Can you find anything at all in the way of implements or other things which would give a possible clue? The trenches from which they come must be of supreme interest. Will you ask your agent to procure every single specimen he can of this pottery? I am quite willing to pay anything upto 25/- a piece; and that ought to tempt them; but I don't like the idea of any unorganised digging. There may be so much evidence to be obtained if it is done under skilled supervision—evidence which would otherwise be lost. Is the country, where the mound is situated, such that we could dig there ourselves? The sight of this pottery has made me intensely keen. I cannot be rash enough to commit writing my own yet vague ideas about it, but I believe if other objects could be discovered we may show that we have got back to a date as yet unrepresented in the region by any antiquities.[34]

A few months later he felt confident enough to state that 'they are closely allied to a type found in Cyprus, Phenicia etc. about the 8th century BC, which show a decadent Mycenaean technique and design combined with more purely Asiatic influences . . . I want very much to have some more excavations done in the mound at Nal. I believe that we shall probably get most important results from it, perhaps some of the most important that have ever been obtained in this country.'[35]

These are very interesting observations, especially if they are juxtaposed with the cautious note published in the annual report of 1904–5. There, apart from a description of the pottery and site, Marshall only suggested that they were of a singular type, of Indian/semi-Indian manufacture and dated back to a period before the Christian era (Marshall 1904–5:106). It is possible that this tentative note was sounded after Marshall failed to find any analogies for the Nal pottery in the British Museum. He had carried with him a dozen paintings of the ceramics made by Mrs O'Hara and relevant papers for verification during his furlough in England.[36] As we realize today, Marshall's intuition that the date of the Nal ceramics could significantly push back the existing chronology of Baluchistan was correct, except that when their antiquity came to be finally understood, they turned out to be much older than Marshall had imagined.

But what about the excavations that Marshall was so keen to get under way at Nal? In the autumn of 1904 he asked Aurel Stein to conduct a small dig there. Initially, Marshall had hoped to excavate Nal himself, combining it with his proposed trip to Bahrain in the following year. However, subsequently, because of various pressures, he requested Stein to take over. The latter, however, wished to concentrate on preparations for his tour of Chinese Turkestan, which would be difficult, he claimed, if he was to engage during the ensuing inspection season in excavation enterprises which he would not have the time to complete on systematic lines nor describe properly.[37] While promising to examine Nal, he did not promise systematic excavations there.

Such incidents suggest that Stein occupied a space in subcontinental archaeology, which, in spite of him being attached to the Survey, he was quite independent of the director general. Marshall was evidently greatly disappointed and, with the Charsada experience still fresh in his mind, felt that 'Archaeology has been at a standstill in the Frontier Province' since Vogel gave over charge to Stein.[38]

It was with a view to following up the 'definite traces of Phoenician influence in Baluchistan' and unearthing fresh links in the chain of connection between it and the Mediterranean that, in 1904, Marshall seriously contemplated excavations at Bahrain. J.G. Lorrimer of the Foreign Office had aroused his curiosity about a huge necropolis there which had yielded objects that had been identified by a British Museum man as being of Phoenician workmanship.[39] Marshall's communications indeed reveal a great deal of excitement about undertaking work there. In fact, Lorrimer was of the view that the Indian government ought to allow Marshall to go on duty not merely to Bahrain but to the ruins of Babylon as well: 'Rich and Rawlinson, both Indian officials posted at Baghdad, were among the first investigators of Babylonian remains and now that the Government of India has a Department of Archaeology you are their natural successor—in a sense.'[40] By January 1905 practical arrangements for undertaking fieldwork in Bahrain were under way. Having been informed that no tools of any kind were available, Marshall had been in touch with a firm of contractors in

Karachi about his requirements regarding tackle, pickaxes, shovels, knives, stout rope, etc., and about the need for a 'native' overseer who could possibly speak English and the native tongue of Bahrain.[41]

Why did this excavation never take place? The viceroy's veto pre-empted the expedition. Curzon had apparently been unaware of his plans until Marshall's proposal to get W.H. Nicholls, the recently appointed archaeological surveyor in the United Provinces and Punjab, to accompany him to Bahrain, reached the Foreign Department. When this was brought to Curzon's notice, his instructions were unambiguous. Sanction to take Nicholls was, of course, refused—'I think it is clear that Bahrein must be completely outside the legitimate boundaries either of the United Provinces or the Punjab.' Curzon's annoyance at Marshall's proposed tour was also sharp:

> I wish I had seen this case earlier. For greatly as I admire Mr. Marshall's energy and glad as I shall be to see the *tumuli* at Bahrein systematically excavated, I should yet have felt compelled to raise a serious doubt as to whether the Director-General of Archaeology in India—paid out of Indian revenues, and surrounded by a field of work, which we are simultaneously assuring the Secretary of State will occupy his undivided energies for many years to come—has any business to go outside of India at all. If to Bahrein, on the ground that we have a Political officer there, why not to Baghdad and incidentally Babylon? If on the ground that Bahrein is under a British protectorate, then why not to Ceylon, on the ground that it is a British possession?[42]

So, the tour was cancelled. It left Marshall both resentful and disappointed. His resentment stemmed from the fact that the very same government which had disallowed his official tour to Bahrain was supporting Stein's surveys of regions which were not part of British India: 'I fully realise the inexpediency of devoting either time or money to any undertaking that does not come within our legitimate sphere of work. Let me add, however, that I was under the delusion that Bahrein was not completely outside that sphere. Had it been otherwise, I should have been as opposed to going there as I am to retarding our work in the Frontier Province by the

despatch of an expedition to Central Asia.'[43] His disappointment is evident from the note that he wrote to Cox, the political resident at Bushire, about his inability to go there: 'I much regret to tell you that at the last moment our Archaeological Expedition to Bahrein has had to be abandoned owing to difficulties raised by the Government of India. It was very kind of you to send me so much useful information, and I shall hope to turn it to good account at some future time when I may be able to go to Bahrein on privilege leave. The antiquities there are particularly interesting to me and my disappointment is therefore the greater that I am not able to explore them under the auspices of the Government.'[44] By this time, political trouble was brewing in Bahrain, and, quite independently of Marshall's communications, a telegram from Bushire arrived on 23 January asking if Marshall's visit could be postponed for a month because of the unsatisfactory state of affairs there.

About Bahrain and its connections with third millennium BC cultures we know a great deal. But we will never know whether a field expedition to Bahrain may have hastened Marshall's understanding of the traces of a civilization of comparable antiquity in India.

Disseminating and Documenting Knowledge: Publications and Museum Collections

If ruthless and haphazard excavations had been one serious point of criticism with regard to Indian archaeology, the other was the lack of information about the work that was being done by the Archaeological Survey. The decades following Cunningham's retirement in 1885 had been especially abysmal, partly due to a financial crunch which resulted in large-scale retrenchments, and also because of the absence of a central leadership within the Survey for guiding such work. As Marshall noted, 'Whatever has been done in India during the last thirty years, has been done, as it were in secret. Every body has known that nothing is likely to be heard of it for fifteen or twenty years, and no one has cared to help with support.'[45]

In order to create an interest for Indian archaeology in people, Marshall made a genuine effort to disseminate information. The

'people' he had in mind were the educated public, especially those at home and in Europe. By doing this, he hoped that India would join those countries—Egypt, Italy, Greece—whose work was watched with intense interest by every European country, and would therefore also attract funds for excavation and publication.[46] The overviews of the Survey's latest discoveries and research, that came to be published in the pages of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, were one way of doing this. Newspapers in India were also kept informed. *The Pioneer* was sent details, for instance, of the finds at Sarnath, which it appreciated very much since only occasionally had such information been given in the past. According to its editor, the Archaeological Survey generally behaved as if it was dealing with solemn secrets of the transfrontier.[47]

A major departure was the publication of an archaeological annual. This was to contain the latest results of the current work of the Archaeological Survey while interest in the discoveries was still fresh. Marshall in his 'Introduction' to the inaugural volume (Marshall 1902–3: 3) explained its purpose:

> Instead of silently accumulating during a long course of years the materials for some future volumes, and keeping these materials hidden, as it were, behind a hoarding until the finished structure can be disclosed, it is the intention to show year by year exactly what materials have been and are being collected, so that other labourers may know how they can add to the heap and, if possible, themselves build from it the ultimate edifice. In other words, it is the intention, by means of these progress reports, to show that the Department, so far from looking to monopolise the field of research, desires and facilitates the co-operation of every earnest student and learned society. More than this, it is the intention to attempt to do for India something of what the volumes issued by the Egypt Exploration Fund during the last 20 years have done for the Land of the Pharaohs,—to attract wider and more abiding attention to India's grand treasure-house of historical relics.

Over the years, it was in the annual that new excavations came to be reported. With its extensive illustrations, along with details

relating to both conservation and research, this was one of the most decisive improvements inaugurated by Marshall. The annuals, however, did not generally appear on time. Nor were they priced in a way that would have made them affordable to students and the educated public interested in Indian archaeology.

Museums were also instruments for disseminating information. But first, Marshall believed, more complete series needed to be acquired by them, along with a more systematic arrangement of the material already in their possession. This was the background to the beginning of an active relationship between the Archaeological Survey and Indian museums. On Marshall's recommendation, superintendents of the Survey came to be officially associated with the archaeological sections of museums so as to facilitate improvements in museum holdings.[48] Along with this he also recommended that a small grant of Rs 3,000 be made from the archaeological budget so as to enable government archaeologists to purchase antiquities for provincial museums.

This grant was sanctioned soon enough and what followed was a concerted effort towards building up collections. This is captured most tellingly in a lively correspondence between Marshall, his archaeological officers, and various dealers. Henry Cousens, for instance, was advised on matters ranging from the price of a Chandragupta II gold coin ('Rs 22/- on the outside') to those that could be purchased from widows of colonial officials.[49] In the case of several types of artefacts, Marshall insisted that they be shown to him before they were purchased. With regard to coins, there was a flourishing system of passing off forgeries as originals. The same was true for intaglios. These interested Marshall deeply and he was always on the lookout for them, but only the genuine ones. For instance, of the five intaglios that were sent by Percy Brown, the curator of the Lahore Museum, Marshall rejected two as modern forgeries, and suggested that for the remaining three a sum of Rs 5 should be paid.[50] Occasionally, antiquities from one museum, which in Marshall's opinion were more relevant to another, were moved out. In 1905, the Lahore Museum acquired the whole collection (around 125 in number) of Graeco-Buddhist sculptures of the Madras Museum.[51] The Lahore Museum, in the first decade

of the twentieth century, also began developing an important collection of 'Lamaistica'. This was due to J.Ph. Vogel's interest. He suggested using the services of A.H. Francke of the Moravian Mission at Leh for acquiring such antiquities.[52] Eventually, through Francke, wall hangings, images, and manuscripts of various kinds were acquired. News about the vigorous acquisition policy of the Survey seems to have spread around and resulted in all kinds of people writing to Marshall with offers of antiquities. Among others, John Cockburn's widow wrote from Dehra Dun regarding her late husband's large collection of stone implements from south Mirzapur.[53] Since practically all museums had large holdings of such tools, Marshall was not willing to pay more than Rs 50 for the collection. Mrs Cockburn, however, refused to part with it for less than Rs 500 because she maintained that a few years ago her husband had sold a few he happened to have with him in London for £1 each.[54]

Marshall was constantly communicating with coin and antiquity dealers as well. This included Imre G. Schwaiger, a famous art dealer of Simla and Delhi, on the one hand, and a number of Rawalpindi dealers on the other—Bishen Das, the firm of Jawahir Mull and Lakhmi Das, and Mehr Chand are some of them. A steady haggling about prices was only to be expected and the director general proved to be quite adept at it (Fig. 12.2). A gold bangle from Charsada that was eventually purchased by him from Jawahir Mull and Lakhmi Das had originally been offered, as part of a set of two, for Rs 1,400. Eventually, after a great deal of bargaining, Marshall succeeded in purchasing one of them for Rs 400.[55] On some occasions the antiquities turned out to be forged and were sent back. This in turn led to a chorus of protest from the concerned dealer, as is evident from an extract from a letter written by Chanda Mull and Lakhmi Das to John Marshall about a cameo that was returned by him:

> How can it be forged, please tell us whence it came and if you will not take it, it will be sent to St. Petersburg in Russia. If you will inform us the name of the man who told you that it is a forged one we shall be highly thankful and pray for ever—and we never sell forged coins and

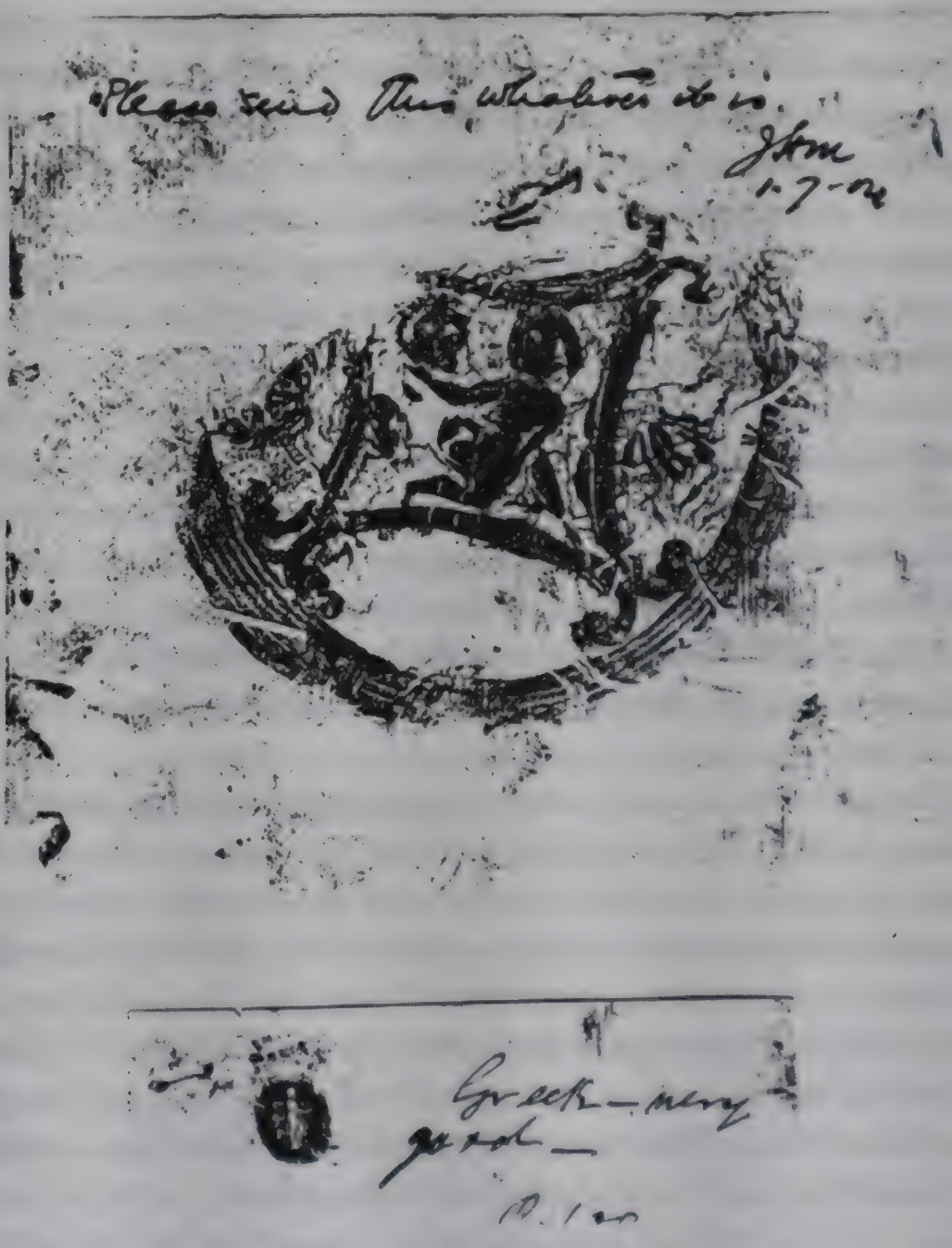

Fig. 12.2: These are among the artefact and coin impressions that were sent to Marshall by the Rawalpindi antiquity dealers. Inevitably, they carry Marshall's comments and the price he was willing to offer for them

such a large nageena never came before and we sold coins to British Museum and Mr. Franke and Mr. Cunningham and others—and we are old coin-dealers. We do not know how did you think of it to be forged . . . Mr Cunningham was well acquainted with us and transacted for years and we have plenty of his letters and you will come to know of us after some time.[56]

Still, some of the forgeries were of such high quality that occasionally even Marshall was fooled. A heavy silver plate, purchased from Mehr Chand, turned out to be a copy of one that had been procured many years ago by Alexander Cunningham. It was several years before Marshall could get a full refund of the Rs 500 that had been originally paid for it.[57]

The circumstances in which statues and sculptures were regularly acquired by museums were, however, quite different. Several statues, for instance, that Theodor Bloch got for the Indian Museum, Calcutta, were images that were being actively worshipped. Bloch's letter to Marshall from Arrah, which outlines how he proposed to acquire three Pala Buddhist statues in Bishenpur village, exemplifies this rather clearly:

> With reference to your Circular No. 10, dated 23 September 1903, placing at my disposal a sum of Rs 400/- for the purchase of antiquities for the Indian Museum, Calcutta, I have ascertained through the Collector of Gaya that three large Buddhist statues, now in village Bishenpur in that District can be acquired for this sum. The images are kept inside a small masonry house and are worshipped by the villagers. The people, however, are willing to part with them on condition that a new Thakur bari (temple) is built in the village, which can be done for the sum of Rs 400.[58]

This became a regular practice, and later in the same decade the rich collection of the Mathura Museum was, to a large extent, built up in this way.

It is no wonder, then, that as far as Indians were concerned, they hardly perceived any distinction between antiquity collectors and archaeologists. Both took away antiquities, including objects of worship, and paid money for them.

Grappling with India's Living Present

Till now, this essay has meandered through a maze of monuments, sites and antiquities as they were being discovered, documented, and conserved. Now, it is perhaps necessary to pause and ask

ourselves what all this meant to Indians. For various reasons, including the fact that archaeology had no place in the education system of the British Raj, this activity was rarely viewed, by the average person who happened to come in contact with its practitioners, as an intellectual pursuit concerned with unravelling India's past. Instead, archaeologists were generally regarded as persons who were part of the British sarkar, as the archaeological surveyor J.Ph. Vogel put it, for the 'natives', 'Sahibs' are 'identical to the Sarkar'.[59]

A useful entry point for exploring indigenous perceptions would be the living heritage of India made up of religious shrines, family memorials and forts, since this was the cultural ground where 'archaeology' and its resonances most deeply affected Indians. At the outset it is necessary to emphasize that not all old shrines and monuments that formed part of India's living present came within the purview of the Archaeological Survey. Many important temples in South India, for example, were privately owned and managed, and there, as before, old structures and architectural elements continued to be demolished by the Nattukottai Chettiar community and replaced by new ones. The Tirupallaturai temple at Trichinopoly was one such structure, and all that Marshall could do was prevail upon the temple authorities to postpone demolition work until the time that his epigraphist, V. Venkayya, could accurately copy the old inscriptions there.[60]

Even so, an astonishing number of historic structures relating to a variety of religious traditions and faiths were documented and repaired as a part of the general archaeological policy of the British Raj. The problems arising out of this and the solutions envisaged depended on various factors. For instance, in the case of Burma, private Buddhist enterprise was very active in repairing ruined 'pagodas' and renovating old ones. But in order to ensure that this was done according to British notions of conservation, the intervention of the Buddhist 'archbishop' and his 'Council' was sought by Marshall. A precedent for this already existed in the form of the trust schemes of the Ananda and Shwezegon pagodas at Pagan, where there were clauses that required the sanction of the controlling 'archbishop' for the erection of new 'pagodas', *zayats*, and other buildings.[61]

Shrine guardians, though, were not always willing to adhere to British systems of monument upkeep. In fact, in some quarters a very real fear came to be increasingly articulated about archaeological work being a government strategy for encroaching into the religious sphere. As a part of the Survey's programme for the restoration of the temples of Jugal Kishore and Radha Ballabha in Brindaban, photographs and plans of these structures began to be made in the summer of the year that Marshall arrived in India. This, resulted in the caretakers of the latter temple in July 1902 petitioning the government, asking whether the plans and photographs of the temple which were being prepared meant that the government wished to make a claim to its title or possession.[62]

That such fears were not entirely unfounded is evident from the case of the Mahabodhi temple in Bihar, where the British government believed that they had acquired rights over the shrine by repairing it. Curzon was characteristically forthright when he said that the acts of restoration at Mahabodhi 'seem to involve the gradual assertion of a co-ordinate authority, with power, if not to dispose of the shrine or to expropriate the Mahanth, at least to superintend his superintendence and to control his control' (Lahiri 1999: 37). The Bodh Gaya temple affair was one that involved Marshall only in a marginal way. His main duty there was to remove a large number of stone pillars from the mahant's *math* to the temple area. When Marshall visited Bodh Gaya in November 1904, he was not able to secure the mahant's consent. Eventually, it was the commissioner of the Patna division who succeeded in getting the mahant to hand over the railings. Incidentally, the latter insisted on paying for dismantling and re-erecting the pillars, as he was afraid to lose his right over the temple if government paid for their relocation.

Guardians and devotees frequently regarded archaeological work as something that places of worship had to be protected from, lest they altered existing rights. This, in turn, affected the nature and method of work at various historic shrines. A good example is the restoration work undertaken around this time at the Dilwara temples in Abu. In July 1904, Seth Lalbhai Dalpatbhai, acting president of the Jain Committee, in his discussion with the agent

to the governor general of Rajputana, was categorical that, while the entire Jain community were very anxious to have their temples at Dilwara restored and most grateful for the counsel and advice of European officials, it was their express wish and desire that the work be left entirely under their management and control, and should not be considered in any way a government work. A system was thus evolved by which money was raised entirely by the community, while the Jain Committee controlled and managed the work of conservation in its own way. Among other things, the committee did not think that it was necessary to make and provide detailed estimates, which Marshall wanted, since it was the sole financier of the restoration work. The Survey and its officers were neither closely nor directly involved because, as Henry Cousens put it in his report, the Jain Committee 'seem to fear that Government are trying to get the temples into their own hands, and that these repairs are the thin edge of the wedge'.[64]

Marshall, in his own way, recognized that when private monuments were being repaired at government expense, suspicions such as those articulated by the Jains at Abu or the Adhikaris of the Brindaban temple had to be sensitively handled. In at least one case, that of Tagah Khan's tomb at Delhi, he himself went out of his way in trying to undo the injury that been inflicted by Delhi's deputy commissioner on the religious sentiments of its proprietor. The following extract is from Marshall's own memorandum:

> The case of Taga Khan's tomb near Delhi has lately come up. The estimates for its repair had been sanctioned, when the owner refused to allow any interference. If reliance can be put on his own statements there was good reason for the objection. 'That the Deputy Commissioner told him several times that if the repairs were done by Government the tomb would be under its control . . .' Members of his family had been buried in the tomb since its foundation and he naturally desired the same privilege. The tomb has been used on three days in the year for family ceremonies; on these days he desires entire privacy. On his part he is willing to engage to be responsible for any damage done and to maintain a Chowkidar to admit visitors to the enclosure of the tomb. Such a contract appears perfectly reasonable. It is possible

> that the owner's words are not to be relied upon; but however this may be, it is obvious that the lines of action to be followed by collectors in cases of this kind ought to be definitely settled. The tomb of Taga Khan is of great importance. Nor is the loss of this building all. For, if the impression is allowed to gain ground that the Government can acquire the absolute control of buildings merely by repairing them, the difficulties in the way of the Archaeological Survey in dealing with Private monuments will be greatly augmented.[65]

Eventually, Marshall visited the owner, Mirza Bulaki, and worked out an agreement with him on lines that assuaged his fears, allowed right of burial in the tomb for his dead, and exclusive access on certain designated days.[66]

Marshall had to deal with a variety of petitions and demands from various groups for restoring mosques to their original state and use. Some of these groups he interacted with quite closely, especially in those cases where the imperial government was financing restoration work. The Jama Masjid Committee at Delhi and its secretary, Ghulam Muhammad Hasan Khan, was one such case.[67] While the mosque was poor in funds, its guardians desired repairs, which were both extensive and costly. They also had very definite ideas, often contrary to those held by the Survey, about the technicalities of such work. For instance, there is a lengthy correspondence regarding the design of ornamental lamp posts, which Viceroy Curzon had promised to the committee. Marshall tried unsuccessfully to bring the committee around to dispensing altogether with lamp posts around the central tank, using instead either small lights in niches around it or low Persian standard lamps.

The Survey was not particularly enthusiastic about handing back old structures that were being documented and conserved, for active worship. The Bukhara Masjid at Bijapur had at one time been used as a post office but was later restored and handed back to the Muslims. Marshall, however, was incensed to discover that since then it had been 'whitewashed, that prayer matting had been spread, lamps suspended, and prints pasted on the back walls', and suggested that no mosques or other buildings which had once been the property of the government should be handed back to the

Muslims.[68] Moreover, even if they were allowed to pray there, he believed that they ought to be subject to strict regulations. The spirit of conservation, on such occasions, was positioned against the systems of worship of India's inhabitants. This is also evident from the viceroy's comments regarding the above-mentioned case (*Indian Archaeology*: 217), where Curzon maintained that '. . . having saved them from the destructive carelessness or the uncultured neglect of white men, we are not going to hand them back to the dirt and defilement of Asiatic religious practices'. Again, such statements underline that the British government believed that by repairing shrines they had acquired certain rights over them, including that of deciding what, they believed, were the proper methods of conducting prayer.

At this juncture, it is relevant to point out that during Marshall's early years there were situations arising out of policy decisions relating to conservation, where stereotypes of communities were used to push and justify a particular line of action. In such situations, too, historic monuments became the focus of controversy. An episode in the history of Sanchi's conservation illustrates this most starkly.

Sanchi had been visited by Curzon within the first year of his viceroyalty and, as elsewhere, he had left a copy of his instructions relating to the preservation of the monuments with the political agent at Bhopal. Following the viceroy's visit, in the beginning of 1902, Henry Cousens had drawn the attention of the state to certain measures that were necessary for the protection of the northern and eastern gateways and for the conservation of Stupa 2.[69] Work was started in 1904 by Cook, the state engineer, who also began repairing the outer railing of the main stupa. Surprisingly, instead of attempting to preserve and repair old or split pieces, he decided to replace them—roughly one-sixteenth of the railing (17 pillars, 12 rails, and 7 coping stones) was removed by him. Greater damage would have taken place but for the intervention of C.E. Luard, the Superintendent of Gazetteers in Central India, as a consequence of which Cook was telegraphically ordered to suspend work.

Marshall himself had been absolutely unaware that repairs of

any kind were going on at Sanchi until he received Luard's letter. He was, however, to visit it shortly afterwards. Apart from some minor rectifications, he admitted that Cook's faulty restoration could not be altered: 'I dare not suggest dismantling the new repairs, as it would mean further damage to the old work which is still *in situ*, and moreover, the original pillars and rails, which have been removed could not now be replaced.'[70] Quite aptly, then, Curzon described this as the 'consecration of a desecration'.[71] Interestingly, many decades later, in his summary of the history of conservation contained in his definitive volumes on Sanchi, Marshall remained silent on this mishap. Treasure hunters and British archaeologists of the nineteenth century, including Cunningham and Cole, were mentioned, but the destructive 'restoration' done during the first few years of his own tenure was excluded (Marshall and Foucher 1940: 7–9).

Going back to 1904, Cook's 'restoration' became the occasion for a larger dialogue within the portals of the government about ways to conserve Sanchi. From the correspondence it seems that in addition to poor restoration work, the caretaker arrangements with regard to the hundreds of valuable sculptures lying around came to be commented upon at length. Marshall was to recommend to the imperial government that a museum be set up in order to ensure their safe custody. But what is striking is that the recent unsatisfactory conservation work was explained away as an aberration that resulted from the personal injury that Cook had suffered, while the religion of the caretakers came to be blamed for the laxity of superintendence. Muslims were represented, in the communications pertaining to this case, as a class whose religion congenitally prevented them from acting in the interests of 'natives' following religious practices other than their own, and this became the basis for unilaterally recommending their exclusion from Sanchi. So, Marshall began to look for Buddhist caretakers. Anagarika Dharmapala was contacted who informed him that for a salary of Rs 10 per mensem only a layman, not a Buddhist guardian, would be willing to go to Sanchi.[72]

Curzon himself was not averse to the suggestion of employing

Buddhists, but Marshall had not bargained for opposition from Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum, the ruler of Bhopal. The Begum was later to become Marshall's main benefactor at Sanchi—his volumes on Sanchi are, in fact, dedicated to her memory—but the relationship does not seem to have begun on a hopeful note. Sultan Jahan was actively opposed to employing Buddhists and some of this, it seems, stemmed from the well-known 'troublemaker' reputation of the Maha Bodhi Society's founder: 'the objection of the Begum to the Buddhist care-taker . . . is due to the fear that like Mr. Dharmapala at Bodh-Gaya he will sooner or later introduce an image of Buddha for local worship, an innovation which her Mahomedan ideas induce her to regard with extreme repugnance.'[73] From the point of view of the Begum, what seems to have upset her was that her capability to look after the state's monuments and affairs relating to them was being doubted. Marshall and other British officials, on the other hand, viewed her resistance as relating to her personal religion and soon began to construe it as representing a disinclination to preserve Sanchi itself: 'it is hardly reasonable that she should be called upon to preserve what she regards as the relics of heathendom.'[74] And so, the possibility of 'relieving' her of Sanchi, by taking over its custody, came to be briefly considered by the imperial government. This was not to happen, but the endeavour here, as in the case of Sanchi's caretakers was to exclude the local princely family from a monument in its own principality because of their personal religion.

In retrospect, even Marshall could hardly have regarded as credible his own claims that 'Mahomedan' chowkidars and excavation assistants could not be trusted with sculpture and images. After all, from 1912 onwards, it was a Muslim, Ghulam Qadir, who was Marshall's excavation assistant and right-hand man at Sanchi. Qadir 'did yeoman's service in the task of excavating and restoring its monuments', and Marshall, in fact, devoted a whole paragraph to his contribution in the preface of his work (Marshall and Foucher 1940: ii). It was also the same Ghulam Qadir to whom Marshall entrusted the excavation of the Jandial temple and the Dharmarajika stupa at Taxila.

Britishers, European 'Foreigners', and Indians

From monuments and museums I now turn to some aspects of Marshall's interpersonal relations in the formative years of his career. As we know, he was trained in Classical archaeology but spent all his working years overseeing and shaping archaeology in colonial India. Like most other administrative organizations of that time, the Archaeological Survey was an ensemble of different kinds of people, just as its policies were the product of various priorities and pressures. In this regard, what were Marshall's perceptions of his subordinates and how did the larger politics of that period influence his decisions and ideas?

The Archaeological Survey, when Marshall arrived in India, was a very small organization. There were only six officers—Henry Cousens, Alexander Rea, Theodor Bloch, J.Ph. Vogel, Taw Sein Kho, and E. Hultzsch. Among themselves they were expected to oversee exploration, excavation, documentation, conservation, and epigraphy (Marshall 1939: 14). The pressure of work, undoubtedly, was tremendous, though the surveyors did succeed in accomplishing a great deal. What comes as a surprise is that, in spite of the Survey being so small, its officers lived in their own separate worlds and may have spent decades in India without ever meeting up. For example, Henry Cousens met Hultzsch, government epigraphist, for the first time at the Poona railway station in 1903. Hultzsch had just accepted a Sanskrit professorship at Halle and was on his way out of India. According to Marshall, he turned out to be 'quite a different looking man to what I pictured him. Very German both in look and accent—He is a big man, full beery looking face (between ourselves).'[75] Thus, there is very little information on how the different circles of the Survey and their officers interacted with each other. The only factor common to all of them was John Marshall.

For Marshall, there was a very clear division between his British officers and those who were European 'foreigners'. In his proof copy on proposals for the future organization of the Archaeological Survey of India, he considered the question of recruiting officers

for the post of archaeological superintendents mainly from English ranks. He was obviously not happy with the fact that there were in those posts 'three European Foreigners—one German, one Dutchman and one Hungarian—as against two Englishmen, on the survey. Dr. Vogel and Bloch are Sanskrit philologues, who came to India to prosecute their researches and were offered their appointments because no English philologues could be found to accept the post on the salary given.'[76] Incidentally, the 'Hungarian' mentioned here is Aurel Stein.

In drawing attention to the difference in Marshall's perception of British and other European officers in his department, one is by no means trying to say that he was especially enamoured of his British subordinates. Privately, Marshall was critical about almost all his provincial superintendents, but in the case of those who were not British, he singled out their European descent as a factor that demanded consideration. For instance, with regard to conservation work, apart from H. Nicholls who was appointed in 1904, Marshall maintained that there was hardly a man whose judgement he could rely on. But in an obvious reference to his European assistants, he stated: 'The German and other foreign assistants are always the worst offenders in this respect. Would that we could find some sound English scholars.'[77] James Burgess, the man to whom he made this observation, agreed: 'German assistants are not always the best. Berlin and Vienna profit by them, not the British Museum.'[78]

Marshall perceived the root of the problem to be the policy of choosing Sanskritists rather than architects for the Survey. This, in his opinion, was an odd preference since five-sixths of their work was concerned with architecture. He, therefore, strongly advocated filling up any vacancies with recruits from the ranks of English architects. Subsequently, on his recommendation, several archaeological surveyors of British origin and with architectural training, including Nicholls and his own brother-in-law, A.H. Longhurst, were appointed.

As for his British assistants, Marshall thought that Alexander Rea was fairly good but failed to realize where the main chances

were, being content to go on digging out the same class of 'prehistorics' month after month.[79] His relations with Cousens were fraught with tensions of various kinds. Cousens's correspondence with Marshall suggests a man who was overworked, with frayed nerves, always asking his director not to push him. While writing in August 1905 to request at least a month's extension for submitting his annual progress report to the Bombay government, he informed Marshall that he was living at his office because that was the only way he could devote every available hour to his work.[80] The pressure of work was so much that there were times he would spend a whole week in his office-cum-residence without going out.

The director, in turn, found Cousens to be rough edged and tactless: 'I find him very offensive at times in his dealing with me,' he wrote in 1905, 'and it is only by much self restraint that I am able to rub along with him.'[81] Cousens's lack of discretion also led to problems between Marshall's department and the local government officers in Central India. The controversy related to the manner of disposal of certain copper plates that had been found in the Siddeshvara temple at Mandhatta in the middle of 1905. Cousens had, in this context, written a strong note to Marshall, stating that the copper plates, whose impressions he had asked for, had, with the consent of the deputy commissioner of Nimar, been locally deciphered and published, and that this was contrary to the spirit of the rules of the Government of India.[82] Marshall, in turn, sent the correspondence to J.O. Miller, the chief commissioner, asking him to put in a word to the deputy commissioner. Instead, within a few days arrived a long diatribe, requesting Marshall to instil some common sense in Cousens. His intervention, Miller maintained, while technically justified, was not likely to encourage an interest in archaeology: 'if all inscriptions are to be regarded as, in some sense, the private property of the Archaeological Department, you must not expect that much interest will be taken locally in discovering them.'[83] Miller also used the occasion to remind Marshall that it was because of Cousens that the Central Provinces failed to apply in time for the imperial archaeological grant.

Apart from his countrymen in India, Marshall also had to deal with various people and organizations back home. There was James Burgess, for instance, with whom Marshall had both an official and a personal relationship. Their interaction began before Marshall left for India, when he was sent to Edinburgh to ascertain the state of Burgess's progress on various volumes that had been with him ever since he had retired. Even later, it was periodically necessary to ascertain that Burgess could account for all the drawings and manuscript copies that had been sent from India, and to rescue the material relating to various monuments in western and peninsular India from the confusion of Burgess's library. Marshall sought his advice on various other occasions as well. It is to Burgess that Marshall sent the list of places proposed for the archaeological map which was being prepared for the *Imperial Gazetteer*, asking for corrections.[84] Marshall, in turn, was generous about offering the services of the Survey for Burgess's work, as for instance with regard to material that Burgess required for his sketch of Indian architecture for the *Imperial Gazetteer*.[85] His subordinates, however, were not as accommodating; Cousens claimed that he did not have the time to get photo prints of Chalukyan architecture drawings prepared for Burgess, while Bloch wrote in October 1904 to say that the plan and section of the dancing hall in front of the 'Black Pagoda', which Burgess wanted, could only be prepared for him by April 1905.[86]

Gossip about the Survey and archaeological work in India was also shared. Marshall confided to Burgess about P.C. Mukharji: 'Did I ever tell you that the Government saddled me with Mukharji, when first I came to the country? He is astonishingly ignorant; but I hope to make some use of him as an overseer at excavations.'[87] Burgess informed him that he too had suffered such an unfortunate fate and that Mukharji used to find out the contents of his 'confidential' letters probably through some Bengali clerk in the Secretariat. Burgess, incidentally, was highly critical of the restoration work being undertaken by the Survey under the instructions of Curzon, and expressed his alarm to Marshall on many

occasions. In November 1903, he wrote, 'I am sorry to hear of so many "restorations"; they are dangerous undertakings in more ways than one. And a decade hence economists may point the finger at them as a waste of "poor" India's money and raise another cry to abolish the Archaeological Survey to get means for some new scheme.'[88] Later, this was to be a major point of disagreement and debate between Marshall and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and its secretary, Thackeray Turner.

The Survey and the Indian government's interaction with the British Museum was also uneven. On the one hand, Marshall had been appointed on the recommendation of Maunde Thompson, the director who had also, subsequently, provided Marshall's archaeological library at Simla with many museum publications (Lahiri 1997; also Lahiri 1998: 11). On the other hand, there were serious differences about what was to be regarded as the British Museum's legitimate share *vis-à-vis* the share of Indian museums. The Stein collection and its disputed division reflects this sharply (Lahiri 1998: 11 and footnote 44). Similarly, the Piprahwa relics became the subject of some tension between the Survey and the British Museum. C.H. Read, keeper of British and medieval antiquities and ethnography there, is known to have complained to the India Office, London, that a portion of the relics from the stupa at Piprahwa which were to have come to them were never dispatched from India.[89] As it happened, an enquiry revealed that the trustees of the Indian Museum, Calcutta, had only promised to the British Museum a cast of the inscribed steatite vase, but not any portion of the relics.

Marshall was quite categorical about the unreasonable nature of Read's complaint, especially in the context of the British Museum's unhelpful attitude when it came to helping the Archaeological Survey. As his noting put it, 'although I am very attached to the British Museum, I must say that they treat us very badly. During the last two years we have asked them on two or three occasions for information about antiquities which we had sent them, but so far without success, although it was merely a matter

of taking a photograph or a rubbing of an inscription!'[90] He recommended that in considering the requests of the British Museum, their method of dealing with the Survey's requests for information about antiquities that had been sent to them by the Indian government in the first place ought to be kept in mind.

Then, there were the Oxbridge Indologists who functioned both as a source of assistance and as a pressure group. Among other things, they were regularly consulted for filling up various vacancies, including the principalships of the Calcutta Madrasa and Punjab University, as also the post of director general of the Archaeological Survey of India. In turn, they lobbied hard for the introduction of schemes that would encourage the training of language specialists who in turn could, they argued, be appointed to various posts in India and England.

Soon after Marshall went on furlough, a representation was received from professors of Sanskrit and Arabic in England—including A.A. Macdonell, Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, and E.J. Rapson, Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge—about the inadequacy of the encouragement given to Oriental studies and the difficulty in finding adequate English persons for various posts. They suggested the establishment, at the cost of Indian revenues, of a system of teaching fellowships to be held in India by English Orientalists who would then be qualified for educational work in India. Along with this representation, the Indian government was asked to comment on Macdonell's suggestion in the paper that he read before the Royal Asiatic Society, 'The Study of Sanskrit as an Imperial Question'. There he had strongly argued that Sanskrit should be treated as a *sine qua non* in making appointments to the Survey.

Marshall, as we know, was actively opposed to the policy of appointing language experts as officers in the Survey. However, since he was on furlough, the matter was referred to Henry Cousens, then officiating as director general of the Survey. Cousens was equally forthright. His reply sharply underlines the divide in this regard between the perception of the Archaeological Survey of India and Indologists back home:

> Epigraphists seem to come to India in order to prosecute their studies in Sanskrit with a view to getting the first vacant chair at some University at Home: they make the survey a means of support in the meantime, and when they have gained some experience and are becoming useful we lose them. The inclination of an Epigraphist is naturally strongly towards epigraphical research, and this will cause him as a superintendent to pay undue attention to it to the detriment of his other work. As Superintendent in the Survey we want a practical man with a more comprehensive knowledge; this an epigraphist rarely is.
>
> The man who does his work thoroughly as Superintendent has no time whatever for epigraphical work. I myself began the study of Sanskrit and subsequently of Persian but had to abandon both. Therefore the immature Epigraphist who joins the Survey as Superintendent must remain immature unless he neglects his more legitimate work. The greater part of a Superintendent's work at present, and for many years to come, is the oversight of the conservation of Indian monuments.[91]

What about Indians? Marshall interacted with Indians at various levels. First, he was the recipient of various petitions from different religious groups, some of whom he worked with quite closely. This essay has already drawn attention to this. Then, Marshall depended a great deal on Indian firms for the practical implementation of conservation work. For instance, many of the restoration schemes around the Mughal buildings at Agra and Delhi were executed through the firm of Nuthoo Ram and Sons of Agra. This firm was especially renowned for their mosaic work and had received awards at various exhibitions including the Oudh Exhibition at Lucknow in 1864 and at the Melbourne International Exhibition in 1881. Interestingly, Marshall himself used to keep in constant and direct touch with them, asking them to furnish prices, haggling with them about estimates for marble inlay, imploring them to increase the strength of workers, etc.[92]

Marshall also had some Indian assistants. Because of the institution of two archaeological scholarships in 1903—one in Arabic or Persian, the other in Sanskrit—for training 'native' students in archaeological work, there was, over the years, a steady influx of

very promising young Indian scholars in the Survey.[93] The basic calibre of the students who applied for the scholarships can be gauged from the fact that in the first year of its institution itself the scheme attracted a large number of candidates who had stood first in their subjects in university examinations. The candidate who was selected for the first Sanskrit scholarship was Daya Ram Sahni. He had been working as a Mcleod Kashmir Sanskrit Reader in Oriental College at Lahore and had obtained a medal for Sanskrit in the BA examination at Punjab University, and later, first place in Oriental languages in the MA examination.[94] The Persian and Arabic scholarship was also awarded to an Oriental College boy—Niaz Muhammad Khan. He was Mcleod Arabic Reader there and had obtained the first position in Arabic and History at the Punjab University BA examination in 1903.[95] Niaz Muhammad, however, left in July 1905 and, in his place, Ghulam Yazdani, a graduate of St Stephen's College, Delhi, was selected.[96] Yazdani was then around 20 years old and had passed his BA from Punjab University in 1905, securing first place in Arabic in the province. T.A. Gopinatha Rao, who later became an authority on Hindu inconography, had also applied but could not be selected because he knew neither Persian nor Arabic.[97]

The first Indian assistant archaeological surveyor, appointed by Marshall in 1904, was Devdatta Ram Krishna Bhandarkar, the son of R.G. Bhandarkar, former vice-chancellor of Bombay University. He was recommended for this post by Henry Cousens, superintendent of the Archaeological Survey, Bombay, who proposed to use him for compiling the lists of antiquarian remains and collection of inscriptions in Rajputana and Central India.[98] Again, it was in 1904 that Maulvi Nur Baksh was appointed as an assistant to Nicholls, archaeological surveyor of 'Muhammadan' monuments in the United Provinces and Oudh.[99] There was a practical reason for this—the permanent assistance of a 'maulvi' for Nicholls was essential since he was wholly unacquainted with Persian and Arabic. Nur Baksh had in 1902 served John Marshall in a similar capacity. He had translated Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's *Athar al-Sanadid* for Marshall in order to facilitate the Survey's restoration of Mughal

buildings in the Red Fort at Delhi.[100] Details can, of course, be multiplied, but what seems reasonably clear is that Marshall, in various ways, depended on local knowledge and on the Indians in the Survey.

At the same time, he also articulated an opinion that Europeans were possessed of skills that were genetically missing in Indians. This comes through in the correspondence again and again. In his tour of Bengal, he was, for instance, furious at the lack of experienced supervision of conservation work by a thoroughly incompetent European officer, who, he caustically said, sprang up, and with great affectation, only when the viceroy or lieutenant-governor came around. He then went on to clarify: 'Let me not convey the impression that I have any complaint to make against the native supervisors whom I saw at Gaur, Panduah, Bhubaneswar or Konarak. On the contrary, they were doing their work as well and better, perhaps, than might reasonably be expected of them. But native assistants do not possess that sympathy for works of art and that trained judgement which is so frequently needed in undertakings of this class, without which success can seldom be attained.'[101]

What we know about interactions between Indians and British officials, incidentally, challenges such formulations (Loomba 1998; also Lahiri 2000). Such representations are best viewed as ideological reformulations of a more general colonial stereotype, which, for political reasons, had constructed an irreducible difference between Indian inhabitants and their British rulers.

In Need of Change of Air

By 1906, Marshall was physically worn out. Having taken no time off at all since he came to India, he had repeatedly suffered from chest infections of various kinds and, in 1905, from serious lung congestion and pleurisy.[102] G.T. Birdwood, civil surgeon at Agra, declared him to be in a bad state of health, 'absolutely run down and in need of change of air'. Following the Agra Medical Board's recommendation, Marshall was to proceed on eight months leave on 14 April, sailing from Bombay for England, aboard the *S.S. Egypt*.

By that time, Marshall's mentor had also left, after resigning from the viceroy's post because of various circumstances. Marshall must have felt the loss acutely. So did other officers of the Survey. 'I have been for the past 23 years engaged in this work, and I can confidently say, that His Excellency has done more towards archaeology, than any other that has occupied a position of authority during my period of service. Such friends of archaeology are badly needed, and are only too few', wrote Alexander Rea.[103] Henry Cousens, another old India hand, expressed a similar sentiment: 'I feel we are losing our best friend but earnestly hope that, before long, His Excellency will be in such a position at Home as still to be able to use his official influence to ensure, if need be, the continuance of the work reorganised by him.'[104]

Even after Curzon left India, Marshall continued to share a close affinity with him. I give in full the last letter that he wrote to him before sailing for England. It vividly captures for us the relationship that had been forged while Curzon, who was regarded by Marshall as his guru, had closely watched and guided him in his official capacity.[105] This bond was to outlast their official association:

Dear Lord Curzon,

I hope that you will forgive the delay, which has occurred in procuring a copy of Colonel Hodgson's plan of the Taj, for which Mr Nathan asked me some months since, I enclose it along with lithography of the large coloured map in the museum. Neither Nicholls nor myself has been able to trace any other plan of interest, but should we succeed in finding one, I will of course forward a copy.

Your legacy of conservation work both here and elsewhere goes on very satisfactorily, despite the little interruptions of the Royal visit. General De Brath gave us most valuable assistance in the Committee on the Lahore buildings, and I have little doubt that we shall soon be in possession of those which we want. Several pre-mutiny photos which we have just discovered show us the river front of the palace at Delhi in the old days, and will help us greatly in the restoration there. The rescue of the so-called 'Zenana' in the Allahabad Fort is nearly accomplished, and the renovation of the somewhat similar structure at Ajmer is finished.

Our excavations also at Kasia, Rajgir and Amravati are proving very productive, and like our previous work at Sarnath and Basarh, quite dispel the idea that India does not offer as good a field to the explorer as most western countries do.

The Secretary of state has now sanctioned the permanency of our Department and I am proposing to take a summer holiday in England before settling down to what will now become a lifelong work to me.[106]

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Ancient India and Iran Trust for a small grant which allowed me to get in touch with Malise Wagstaff, stepson of the late Margaret Marshall, Sir John Marshall's daughter. Mr Wagstaff took the trouble of driving down from Leeds to Cambridge on a wet and miserable day in April 1998 and provided many insights into Marshall's personality as also some photographs, including Fig. 12.1. I also remember with gratitude the staff of the Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, and the National Archives of India, New Delhi, who went out of their way to help me with the archival sources on which this essay is based. Finally, my work on the files that are in the Archaeological Survey's head office began because of Charles Lewis. In the spirit of a true fellow researcher, he went to a great deal of trouble to seek me out and drew my attention to that material. I do hope that in a similar academic situation, I too will be able to follow his example.

Notes

The files mentioned below have been consulted in the Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, and National Archives of India, New Delhi.

1. Archaeological Survey of India (hereafter ASI), no. 291 (1) of 1915, Quinquennial review of the work done by the Archaeological Survey Department.
2. Proceedings of the Revenue and Agriculture Department (hereafter PRAD) (Archaeology and Epigraphy [hereafter AE])—A, no. 28 of 1903, 'Note on the Operations and Future Conduct of the Archaeological Survey'.

3. ASI no. 47 of April 1903, note of Marshall, dated 28 July 1903.
4. ASI no. 417 of December 1915, letter of Secretary, Royal Asiatic Society, to John Marshall dated 17 June 1917.
5. PRAD (AE)-B, no. 6 of April 1903. See 'Routine Notes'.
6. ASI no. 104 of July 1903, see letters of Hughes Buller to Marshall, dated 5 May 1903, 31 July 1903, and Marshall's letter dated 10 October 1903.
7. Ibid., letter from Bruce Foote to Hughes Buller, dated 30 December 1903. Foote wrote:

   I was charmed with the photo of the double pot you so kindly sent me. It immediately called to mind some of the Egyptian Pre-historic pottery I had seen the other day in Professor Flinders Petrie's collection at University College, London . . . It would, I think, be worth your while to send a copy of your fine photo to Professor Petrie and ask him to make an actual comparison with some of his double vessels. I am not acquainted with any Indian double or multiple bodied vessels but they are known in Ancient Greece and plentiful in Prehistoric Egypt. Your getting ancient pottery in Baluchistan is a great step in the direction of tracing a possible connection in very early times between India and Egypt which one cannot help expecting and hoping when seeing the remarkable resemblance both in texture of material, colour and form of many of the vessels of the old black and red class which is the typical pottery of the oldest known habitation sites and of the oldest graves in Southern India. The pale reddish fragments of large and small vessels you sent me I could match closely in pattern and size and approximately in colour with Southern vessels—but the material is unlike—it was produced from a better clay than was used for the large funeral or domestic vessels in the South . . .
8. ASI no. 18 of March 1906, letter of Munn to Cass, dated 8 January 1906.
9 ASI no. 45 of May 1902, letter of Burgess to Marshall, dated 10 July 1902.
10. ASI no. 86 of May 1902, Vogel's letter to Marshall, dated 15 March 1903.
11. Ibid., Vogel's letter to Marshall, dated 1 March 1903.
12. Proceedings of the Foreign Department (hereafter PFD) (Internal)—B, nos. 409–10 of March 1906, Marshall's note, dated 18 December 1904.
13. ASI file (number not stated) of October 1903, Marshall's note, dated 28 September 1903.

14. ASI no. 106 of June 1903, R.G. Wood's letter to Marshall, dated 15 June 1903.
15. ASI no. 31 of May 1905, Oertel's telegram to Marshall, dated 14 March 1905.
16. Ibid., Oertel's telegram to Marshall, dated 15 March 1905.
17. Proceedings of the Home Department (hereafter PHD) (AE)—A, nos. 20–1, 'Notes'.
18. Ibid., Marshall's note, dated 13 September 1905.
19. See 'Exploration and Research', in *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India 1904–5*, p. 37.
20. ASI no. 20 of September 1907, Sten Konow's letter to Marshall, dated 3 September 1907, and Marshall's letter to Mulvany, dated 16 September 1907.
21. Ibid., Oertel's letter to Marshall, dated 25 September 1907.
22. He wrote to Oertel: 'The idea of excavating Sarnath was of course entirely your own'. Ibid., Marshall's letter to Oertel, dated 27 September 1907.
23. Ibid.
24. ASI no. 29 of March 1906, Rea's letter to Marshall, dated 25 March 1906.
25. ASI no. 237 of August 1911, Marshall's note, dated 26 April 1912.
26. PRAD (AE)-A, 33–4 of 1903, W.C. Macpherson's letter to Bloch, dated 4 September 1902.
27. ASI no. 175 of November 1904, Marshall's letter to Burgess, dated 20 December 1904.
28. ASI no. 101 of June 1905, Bloch's letter to Marshall, dated 28 March 1906.
29. Ibid.
30. ASI no. 206 of June 1903, Hirananda's letter to Marshall, dated 11 January 1904.
31. ASI no. 55 of September 1903, Marshall's letter to Secretary, Revenue and Agriculture Department, dated 21 March 1903.
32. ASI no. 206 of June 1903, Hirananda's letter to Marshall, dated 29 January 1904.
33. ASI no. 104 of July 1903, Hughes Buller's letter to Marshall, dated 12 October 1903.
34. Ibid., Marshall's letter to Hughes Buller, dated October 1903.
35. Ibid., Marshall's letter to Hughes Buller, dated 30 July 1904.
36. ASI no. 71 of May 1905, 'Notes'.

37. ASI no. 157 of October 1904, Stein's letter to Marshall, dated 30 September 1904.
38. PRAD (AE)-B, no. 1 of October 1904, note of Marshall, dated 26 September 1904.
39. ASI no. 119 of September 1904, 'Notes'.
40. Ibid., Lorrimer's letter to Marshall, dated 6 October 1904.
41. Ibid., Marshall's letter to Messers Herman & Co. Contractors, dated 4 January 1905.
42. PFD (External)-B, nos. 173–81 of March 1905, see Curzon's note, dated 30 December 1904 in 'Foreign Department Notes'.
43. PRAD (AH)-B, nos. 12–15 of February 1905, Marshall's note, dated 12 January 1905.
44. ASI no. 119 of September 1904, Marshall's letter to P.Z. Cox, dated 21 January 1905.
45. PRAD (AE)-A, File no. 28 of 1903, Marshall's 'Note on the Operations and Future Conduct of the Archaeological Survey', dated 29 March 1903.
46. Ibid.
47. ASI no. 31 of May 1905, G. Lhesney's letter to Marshall, dated 30 March 1905.
48. ASI no. 55 of September 1903, J.O. Miller's letter to Marshall, dated 15 June 1903.
49. Ibid., see the letters exchanged between Marshall and Cousens in May 1905.
50. ASI no. 46 of April 1904, see note of Marshall in response to Brown's letter forwarding five intaglios.
51. Ibid., Percy Brown's letter to Marshall, dated 29 April 1905.
52. ASI no. 102 of 1905, Vogel's letter to Marshall, dated 6 December 1905.
53. File no. 46 of September 1904, Part 1, Mrs I. Cockburn's letter to Marshall, dated 23 April 1904.
54. Ibid., Mrs Cockburn's letter to Marshall, dated 29 April 1904.
55. Ibid., Part 6, See 'Notes'.
56. Ibid., undated letter to Marshall.
57. Ibid., Part 5, see letters exchanged between Marshall and Mehr Chand between 1904 and 1907.
58. Ibid., Part 1, Bloch's letter to Marshall, dated 7 March 1904.
59. ASI no. 86 of May 1902, Vogel's 'Memorandum on the Preservation of Archaeological Material in the Peshawar District'.
60. ASI no. 172 of October 1903, letter of Venkayya to Marshall, dated 13 September 1903.

61. ASI no. 137 of September 1904, 'Note by the Director General of Archaeology on the work and organization of the Provincial Survey in Burma', dated 15 July 1904.
62. ASI no. 40 of 1902, See A.B. Gale's letter to Goswamis Gobardhan Lal and Keshori Lalji.
63. ASI no. 115 of August 1904, Bloch's letter to Marshall, dated 22 December 1905.
64. ASI no. 26 of May 1905, Cousen's report to Marshall.
65. ASI no. 129 of November 1902, Serial no. 1, Marshall's report on buildings at Lahore and Delhi.
66. Ibid., Serial no. 17. See Marshall's notes.
67. ASI no. 129 of November 1902, Vogel's letter to Marshall, dated 28 April 1902.
68. PRAD (AE)-A, nos. 8–10 of August 1903, Marshall's 'Memorandum on Conservation and Other Archaeological Work in the Bombay Presidency', dated 5 June 1903.
69. PFD (Internal)-B, August 1905, nos. 421–2. The correspondence and notes regarding this incident are contained in this file.
70. PFID (AE)-A, July 1905, nos. 6–8, Marshall's note, dated 6 May 1905.
71. Ibid., Curzon's note, dated 15 November 1905.
72. ASI no. 79, Dharmapala's letter to Marshall, dated 27 June 1905.
73. PFD (Internal)-B, of May 1906, nos. 378-9.
74. Ibid., V. Gabriel's note, dated 12 April 1906.
75. ASI no. 54 of 1902, Cousens's letter to Marshall, dated 3 June 1903.
76. ASI no. 109 of July 1903, see 'Proposals made by the Director General of Archaeology for the future organization of the Archaeological Survey Department', dated 25 February 1904.
77. ASI no. 175 of November 1904, Marshall's letter to Burgess, dated 20 December 1904.
78. Ibid., Burgess's letter to Marshall, dated 19 January 1905.
79. Ibid., Marshall's letter to Burgess, dated 22 September 1905.
80. ASI no. 146 of September 1905, Cousens's letter to Marshall, dated 22 August 1905.
81. ASI no. 149 of September 1905, Marshall's letter to Miller, dated 9 August 1905.
82. Ibid., Cousens's letter to Marshall, dated 19 July 1905.
83. Ibid., Miller's letter to Marshall, dated 3 August 1905.
84. ASI no. 201 of November 1903, Burgess's letter to Marshall, dated 31 May 1905.

85. ASI no. 175 of November 1904, Marshall's letter to Burgess, dated 3 August 1904.
86. Ibid., Cousens's letter to Marshall, dated 18 October 1904, and Bloch's letter to Marshall, dated 10 October 1904.
87. ASI no. 45 of May 1902, Marshall's letter to Burgess, dated 2 July 1902.
88. ASI no. 201 of November 1903, Burgess's letter to Marshall dated 31 May 1903.
89. ASI no. 95 of 1905, T.W. Holderness's letter to J. Wilson, dated 14 March 1905.
90. Ibid., Marshall's note, dated 1 June 1905.
91. Cousens's note of 19 September 1906, ASI no. 121 of October 1906.
92. ASI no. 129 of November 1902, Marshall's letter to Nuthoo Ram, dated 30 June 1920.
93. ASI no. 133 of August 1903, Memorandum of the Government of India.
94. Ibid., Marshall's letter to Secretary, Revenue and Agriculture Department, dated 10 August 1904.
95. Ibid.
96. ASI no. 107 of June 1903: see the correspondence.
97. Ibid., Gopinatha Rao's letter to Marshall, dated 15 September 1905.
98. PRAD (AE)-A, no. 2 of May 1904, Extract from letter of Superintendent, Archaeological Survey, Bombay, dated 10 February 1904.
99. PRAD (AE)-A, nos. 5–9 of November 1904, Marshall's note, dated 28 May 1904.
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102. PRAD (AE)-A, nos. 13–35 of June 1906, see 'Statement of the case of Mr J.H. Marshall'.
103. ASI no. 204 of December 1905, Rea's letter to Marshall, dated 2 November 1905.
104. Ibid., Cousens's letter to Marshall, dated 12 November 1905.
105. See Marshall 1939: 26. As he says, 'Had he been my guru and I his pupil, he could not have taken more trouble or been more patient and enthusiastic.'
106. ASI no. 234 of March 1905, Marshall's letter to Curzon, dated 19 March 1906.

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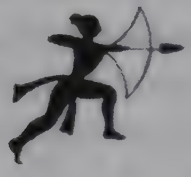
13

D.D. Kosambi: The Historian as Writer



DAMODAR DHARMANAND KOSAMBI IS USUALLY REmembered as a scholar whose passion for the history of ancient India was matched by his admiration for Marxism. Yet his admirers are not limited to those who are either Marxists or scholars of antiquity. Kosambi is quoted approvingly by medievalists writing on Indian feudalism and by historians of modern India on themes that range from forms of popular expression in the 1857 revolt to the advent of colonialism. That he was by profession and training a mathematician rather than a historian makes his work and its influence all the more remarkable.[1]

This essay, though, is not about the multifaceted intellect of Kosambi. I will instead look at him as a historian steeped in things literary, and the ways in which his literary sensibility influenced the subjects, the structure, and the character of his history writing. Why should readers who are interested in Indian writing in English read Kosambi? What would they find in his writings that they are unlikely to find in the historical writings of his contemporaries? How do his narratives reveal his interests, whose range extended

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far beyond the narrow specialization of 'Ancient India'? How did Marxism develop and hinder his insights and his writings? These are some questions that this essay will try and answer. I shall examine Kosambi's work and life together. Many elements of his life figure in his historical works, and help in giving material substance to his writings.

Kosambi was born on 31 July 1907 in Goa (for biographical information on Kosambi, Deshmukh 1993). His parents, Balabai and Dharmanand Kosambi, were Gaud Saraswat Brahmans by birth. Kosambi, most unselfconsciously, tells us about the specific antecedents of his clan, about his *gotra* being Vasistha and his *pravara* that of Vasistha-Maitravaruna-Kundina (Kosambi 1950, reprinted in Chattopadhyaya 2002: 102). Being the firstborn male in the family after the death of his paternal grandfather also meant that the infant was supposed to have 'automatically inherited his soul', as he mentioned in his writings, as also his nickname, and his actual name—Damodar (Kosambi 1962: 158). This was a family that was patriarchal and Brahmanical—in its outlook and traditions, in its dress and manners, and in its treatment of friends. He was told that his grandfather took a purificatory bath after talking with any or many of his Christian friends.

Rather than lineage, it was the unusual life of his father that stamped Damodar's upbringing. Early in his married life, Dharmanand left home many times, wanting to learn Sanskrit and attempting to immerse himself in the teachings of the Buddha. In 1899, about a month after the birth of his daughter, he disappeared for as many as seven years. During those years, he became an itinerant Buddhist, wandering across north India, Nepal, and Ceylon, and visiting places associated with the Buddha's life and teachings. Dharmanand finally returned to his family only in 1906, when he brought his wife and daughter from Goa to Calcutta where he had begun teaching Pali in the National College there. However, in December that year, because of his wife's illness, he sent her back

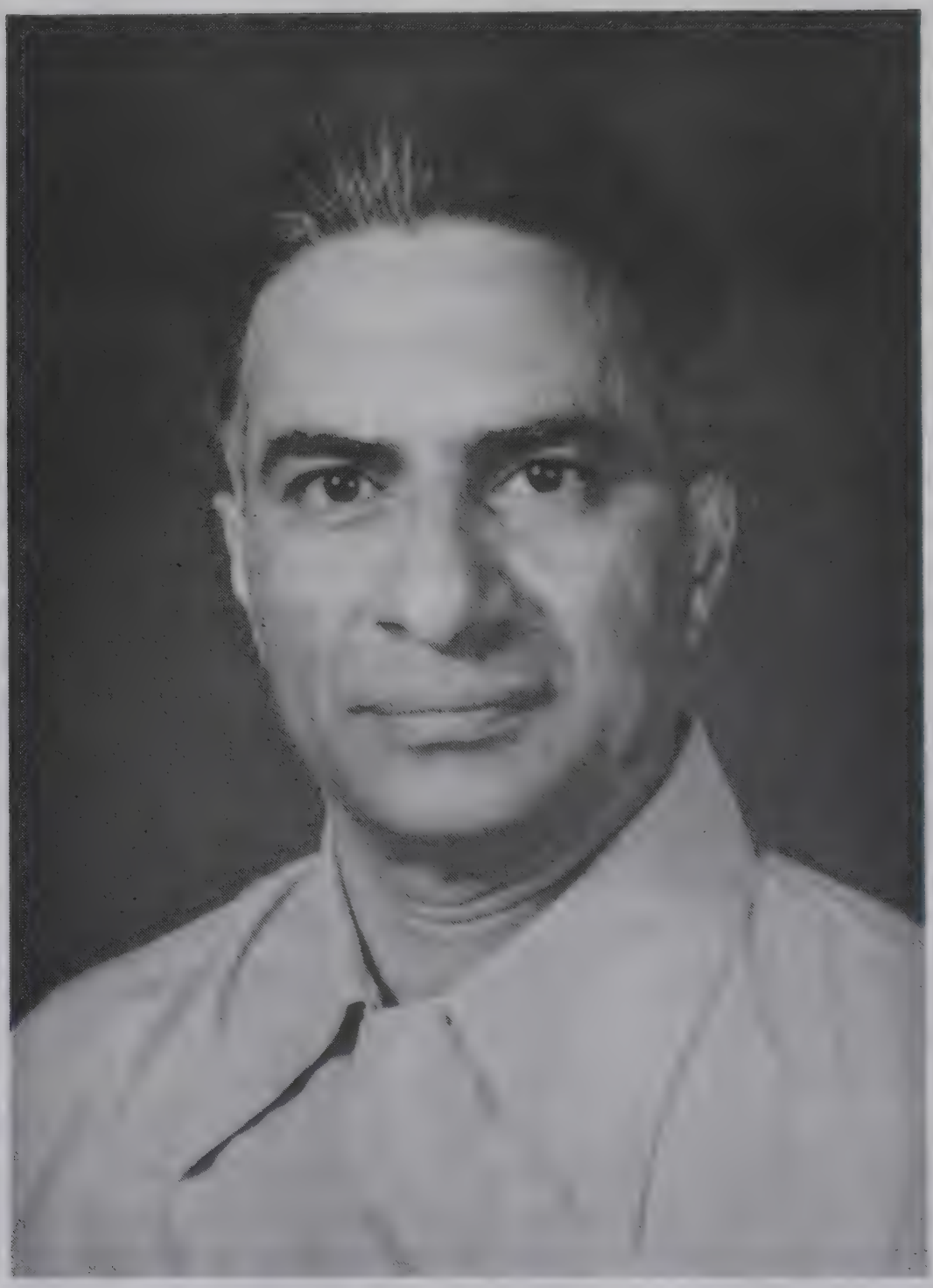

Fig. 13.1: D.D. Kosambi, *c.* 1960

to Goa, where his son was born. Later, Damodar's own research would reveal an enormous empathy for Buddhism. At this point of time, however, Dharmanand's itinerant inclinations—moving from Calcutta to Bombay, Poona, Harvard, and back to Pune—ensured that most of the son's early childhood was spent in Goa.

Damodar lived with his maternal grandfather in Goa, where he became fluent in Konkani and Marathi. His grandfather came from

an old and well-known family, the Lads of Goa, the same one whose last family records he remembered as being 'destroyed by white ants or used up in covering temporary assembly halls' in his boyhood (ibid. 1962: 158). In his description of the village community of Goa which figures in his academic writings, Kosambi would draw heavily on the verbal lore, reliable and unreliable, that he presumably picked up during those years. He tells us there that his 'grandfather is certainly reported to have seen the brilliant light cast at night by the jewel that a king cobra had laid aside while feeding, although no such jewel has ever been found in the head of any cobra in spite of the most active research' (ibid. 1962: 170). At the same time, he also believed that 'tradition as separated from folklore has always a certain element of truth. Under the crumbling, triumphal arch of Vasco da Gama in Old Goa, I was told (in spite of its bombastic Latin inscription) that the statue was that of a sailor who came from afar and became king of the country, which represents the facts better than one could have expected' (ibid.: 171).

The juxtaposition of the ancient, the medieval, and the modern, an element that runs through Kosambi's Indological work, was probably first noticed by him in the landscape of his childhood. His paternal grandfather's farm was sited where the service settlement and the dancing girls' houses of Sancoale's Narasimha temple once stood (on the site of which a chapel came up). In a memorable footnote in his book *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (1956: 328), he vividly evoked its multilayered history—from its pre-Portuguese past to its present. The Narasimha temple, he tells us, was 'wrecked by the Portuguese, who built a chapel over the site. Its lotus-pond still survives; very old, gigantic temple cobras have occasionally crossed the paths of people who are considered very fortunate to have survived the encounter.' In the same vein, he recounted that as late as 1924, it was possible 'to sit through Christmas-eve on a platform built on a fruit tree, watching a tigress return to her kill of a buffalo calf' near the farmhouse, while 'from the chapel side could be heard an impassioned sermon in Konkani by the Padre, while from the house came hunting stories in the far-carrying country voice of the aged head of the family, my uncle.'

In 1912, when his father started teaching at Fergusson College in Poona, Damodar began living with his parents and elder sister, and, subsequently, two younger sisters. He was, in fact, first institutionally exposed to English at the New English School in Poona. Kosambi himself, though, never dwelt on his early exposure to either education or the English language in Poona. An autobiographical account, 'Steps in Science', traces his intellectual evolution to the United States of America (Kosambi 1974: 194). This was because his father went to Harvard University in 1918, to complete the critical edition of *Visuddhimagga*, a book on Buddhist philosophy on which he had also worked in 1910 there. Kosambi, then all of 11 years of age, travelled with his father to Cambridge, Massachusetts, and it was at schools there, and later at Harvard College in 1926 when he returned to Cambridge after a two-year sojourn in India, that he learnt several languages, including French, German, Greek, Latin, and Italian. His felicity with languages allowed him to dip into the Classics in the original, and later publish in European-language journals. He also began speaking English with an American accent. While the accent remained with him for the rest of his life, his relationship with the English language was an ambiguous one. Although his writings were largely in English, towards the end of his life English for him became an exemplar of the stamp of the foreigner. Writing in 1965, he strongly regretted that '14 years after independence English still remains the official language of administration, big business, and higher education in India. No significant attempts have been made to change over, beyond pious resolutions in shiftless committees' (Kosambi 1965: 6).

Kosambi studied mathematics at Harvard, graduating with distinction in 1929. It was a subject that he would teach and research all through his life. Harvard also made accessible to him an astonishing range of ideas and books. He mentions several of these in his intellectual autobiography (Kosambi 1974: 194):

> Alexander Von Humboldt's *Cosmos* surveyed the whole universe known to the 19th century, from the surface of the earth to those mysterious prawn-shaped figures visible through the most powerful telescopes.

> the spiral nebulae. The Einstein theory, arousing passions of theological intensity, had just been regarded as proved, and offered new insight into the structure of space and time. Innumerable outlines made it easy to learn something about every branch of science. Freud had taught men to take an honest look at their own minds; H.G. Wells showed through his *Outline of History* how much the professional annalistic historian had to learn.

This literary appetite would later stamp his historical writings. Kosambi, however, mentions no Indian litterateur. Instead, he somewhat pejoratively contrasts the achievements of Humboldt, Wells, and others whom he described as 'the real *rsis* and *bodhisattvas* of modern times' with 'mythical Indian sages, expressed in incomprehensible language and fantastically interpreted by commentators' (ibid.: 194–5). Kosambi would have been familiar with Indian texts and writers living in close proximity to his scholar-father, even absorbing Sanskrit, as he acknowledged, through the pores. The readings and lives that he remembered as making an impression on him at Harvard, though, were Western sages. In fact, only one Indian, Mahatma Gandhi, figures in the reminiscences of a college friend of his Harvard years. Apparently, Gandhi's portrait graced Kosambi's room in Cambridge. The elder Kosambi had sought employment on his return from Harvard in the Archaeology Department of the Gujarat Vidyapeeth in Ahmedabad founded by Gandhi. Surely, young Kosambi must have met him when he visited his father in 1924–5, and Gandhi's influence on him apparently ensured that for some time he wore khadi. Not surprisingly, it was anti-colonial thought which left its mark on Kosambi's first piece of writing in his Harvard freshman year—a short story entitled 'The Kanpur Road' (reprinted with additions in Kosambi 1957: 67–71).

'The Kanpur Road' is historical fiction, deploying the 1857 rebellion as a backdrop. The story's Sikh protagonist, Govind Singh, 'had campaigned in Abyssinia with Napier, entered Kabul and Kandahar with Roberts, fought in almost every outpost of the desert, mountains, swamp'. Govind Singh had cut down a rebel—his own brother—who had killed the British brigadier served by Govind Singh. What is most striking is not this act of 'fratricidal

loyalty', but the lifelong trauma that it unleashes within that old soldier, whose face, slashed in combat by the brother whom he overcame, bears a 'great livid scar' and the star that was pinned on his chest was 'not to show others my glory, but to remind myself of my grief.' Kosambi then uses this persona and event to draw a parallel with an ancient encounter, that of the invading Alexander and the indigenous king Porus: Govind Singh 'was worthy to have stood with King Pauravas on that fateful day when the tricky manoeuvres of Yavana invaders prevailed against simple bravery'. Also woven into this tale of ancient and modern tragic heroes in times when India was invaded is the dust of the Indian countryside and the pain of hunger and disease. The narrator of 'The Kanpur Road' had heard this story of Alexander and Porus from his 'village school teacher, now dead of starvation and cholera'. The story prefigures the key intellectual features of Kosambi's later work: finely phrased historical themes with a bearing on the present encompassed within a progressive world view.

When did Kosambi begin writing on ancient India and its history? Not before 1940 or 1941 it seems, when he published a short statistical analysis of the coins from Taxila and a long essay on the poetry of Bhartrhari, a philosopher-poet of distinction.

After graduating with distinction from Harvard in 1929, Kosambi was unsuccessful in finding funds for continuing his studies there. So, he returned to India, and spent the next few years teaching mathematics, first at Banaras Hindu University (1929–31), then at Aligarh Muslim University (1931–2), finally settling down in Poona where, in the footsteps of his father, he began teaching at Fergusson College, and continued to do so for the next twelve years or so. While Kosambi described them as a kind of penance, it was in those years that he ranged beyond his competence in mathematics and began to write about numismatics, ancient texts, classics, and contemporary affairs as well. By 1939, in an article on 'The Function of Leadership in a Mass Movement' for

the *Fergusson & Willingdon College Magazine*, he was describing himself as a Marxist (reprinted with additions in Kosambi 1957).

Marxian dialectics figures, in fact, in both the pieces that he wrote in this magazine in 1939. In the first essay, he examined various types of leadership. Good leadership, he says, explains why the communist revolution was successful in Russia, but failed in Germany. In the same breath, he describes part of Mahatma Gandhi's leadership as belonging to a 'restoration of law and order' genre, which devised methods for dissipating excess energy of the lower class (Kosambi 1939a). Evidently, by the time Kosambi became a Marxist, he had moved beyond and against Gandhian ideas, unlike his father who remained devoted to Gandhi. Incidentally, Kosambi's essay was written in the immediate aftermath of the failure of Gandhi's satyagraha at Rajkot, and it was probably this as well as the 1930 satyagraha that he had in mind when he wrote about Gandhi's leadership. This approach would remain typical of a large part of Kosambi's work. While he would devote asides and paragraphs to a class analysis of ancient and modern persona, a full critique, as in the case of Gandhi, would frequently fall short of being presented. Yet the ability to be critical about those who he admired, without fear or favour, remained and marks his later critique of the other powerful Indian leader of his time, Jawaharlal Nehru. Being a 'humble admirer' of Nehru, as he described himself, does not prevent him from pointing out the flaws in Nehru's *The Discovery of India* (1946), especially the absence within it of class analysis (Kosambi 1946: 10–18).

Class analysis features also in the second essay of 1939, which introduces Marxian dialectics into ancient Greece. Writing 'On the Trial of Sokrates', he thinks it would be of 'interest to Marxists' that the method of Socrates 'was the dialectic one, questioning and cross questioning, showing up the contradictions in a plausible and even accepted statement till, by a succession of negations, some sort of valid conclusion was reached' (Kosambi 1939b: 57). Kosambi's empathy for the courage and intelligence of that great ancient thinker who 'was guided by an inner voice' and who 'never allowed fear of the consequences to divert him from obedience' shines

through as does his recognition of the continuing relevance of the Classics (ibid.: 62):

> The inner voice could have told him nothing about the far distant future: that liberalism in 19th century England would flourish because of Croce's close study of Athens in his days; that a study of the classics would be an important political asset for both democrats and reactionaries. But I do think that the inner voice should have made it clear to him that a certain class of people would twist his teaching to their own profits as against the well-being of the body politic.

What led Kosambi into Indology, though, was not Marxism but statistics. As a mathematician, he must have known a fair bit of statistics but, obviously, not nearly as much as he wanted to know (Kosambi 1974: 198). In order to teach himself statistics, he began to statistically study punch-marked coins from hoards found at Taxila. Kosambi's study revealed that the oldest group there was the lightest in weight. But, who were the kings who issued these coins lacking all inscription and legend? This made the task of assigning them to kings and dynasties a tricky one; it required an exploration of king lists and the names mentioned in literary texts. So, from statistical problem-solving Kosambi turned to Puranic, Buddhist, and Jaina texts.

This seems to have been Kosambi's first academic encounter with Sanskrit, a language that he already knew but which he now wanted to master. At Fergusson College, his friend (and later collaborator) V.V. Gokhale, a distinguished Sanskritist, proved a help. Again, Poona was also home to the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute where the Sanskrit scholar V.S. Sukthankar was preparing a critical edition of the *Mahabharata*. Sukthankar suggested to him that he should take up a specific text in order to improve his language skills, and he recommended Bhartrhari's epigrams or *subhasitas*. Through this text, Kosambi would later say, he fell 'into Indology, as it were, through the roof' (ibid.: 199)

Much of the literary value of Kosambi's exploration of Bhartrhari (published in its first form in 1941) can be derived from the structure of its narrative, and among his writings this is one of the few

where he betrays his admiration for the literary skills of an ancient Indian writer. He begins by describing Bhartrhari as one of the great Indian poets 'if for nothing else, Bhartrhari would deserve a place in the front rank of world literature for his consummate handling of so difficult a language as Sanskrit . . . Few could exceed the force of his epigrams, the finality with which the sentiment is rounded out in many of his concluding half-lines' (Kosambi 1941: 704). At the outset, too, he states that there is a lack of information about the persona of Bhartrhari. However, the purpose of the essay was really to query both these propositions. Through the prism of his poetry and the figures of speech that he employed, Bhartrhari was shown to be a Brahman, but one of a comparatively later period. This is not merely because of references to the ten incarnations of Vishnu in his work, but also because of the way he used the word 'samanta', which 'originally "neighbour", can only mean "feudal baron" in V 42. This usage, though current in the sixth century, would be difficult to establish before the Gupta period' (ibid.: 717).

Proceeding to critique the 'greatness' of Bhartrhari, much of the essay is devoted to demonstrating that his concept of renunciation simply did not match up to either that of Western poets like Goethe or those from the East like Sa'di. While this served the purpose of demonstrating that Kosambi had read widely, a literary sensibility that he would make evident in his later work as well, the comparisons between Bhartrhari, a poet of the third/fourth century in India, and the works of a German author of the eighteenth/nineteenth century and a Persian one of the twelfth/thirteenth century appear far-fetched. Kosambi himself appears to have been aware of the problems inherent in this because, halfway through his exposition on Bhartrhari, he conceded that 'no criticism can be called substantial that does not judge an author on the basis of his own axioms, within the framework of the author's own implicit universe of discourse' (ibid.: 708–9).

For that reason, Kosambi then examined Bhartrhari, as it were, on his own terms, and again, found him wanting. Curiously, an important reason for his diminished appreciation of the poet's idea

of renunciation is that it seemed fractured by an inner conflict. Take, for instance, the way in which he examines verse 99 of Bhartrhari's work (ibid.: 709):

> 'Fixed in the *padmasana* seat upon a Himalayan slab on the banks of the Ganges, lost in a yogic trance in the contemplation of the Eternal, shall I ever see those blessed days, when old untimid stags rub their bodies against mine?' Now, clearly, this is not the utterance of a man who has actually tried the joys of yogic contemplation, but of one who feels how happy he might be if he achieved it, in the yet distant future. The composer of these lines still hankers after physical sensation, such that of the stags rubbing themselves against him: sensation which would be completely inhibited by any successful trance, yogic or otherwise.

Such conflicts and dualities exist in the lives of many men and women, and usually, a glimpse into these conflicts imparts an honesty to their writings that is widely admired. In the case of Bhartrhari, the Chinese pilgrim, I-tsing apparently wrote that he alternated no less than seven times between the pleasures of worldly and monastic life. If this was so, it was a duality that was reflected in his work.

For Kosambi, this is precisely what diminished Bhartrhari. But coming back to the form of his argument, just as one starts to wonder why he began his essay by unequivocally ascribing greatness to Bhartrhari, a new yardstick is introduced which restores the ancient poet to a measure of distinction. The reason why Bhartrhari's poetry was singular, Kosambi wrote, was that the poet had the courage to voice fears of not being employed and the attendant poverty that this would bring—themes that are rare in writings of that genre. The verse that he quotes most approvingly is one which reveals the poet visualizing 'his wife as sad-faced, unfed, miserable, with her worn raiment constantly tugged at by pitiful, hungry, crying children' (ibid.: 713).

Ironically, Kosambi approved of Bhartrhari's honestly expressed sentiments as long as these engaged with the dread of poverty, even while frowning upon a similar honesty in the poet's enunciation of renunciation. This may have been because the court

poet, through the expression of his fear of poverty, gave away his class status, a status that Kosambi believed tended to be masked in what he described as a literature of escape. That poetry should largely be valued for its class resonance and not for its multilayered meanings or its style is an argument with which not everyone can agree. But, one does not have to agree with Kosambi in order to admire the dialectic that structures his work—where a great poet's warts are strongly foregrounded, and just as the reader begins to doubt this greatness, a little-known aspect of his work is highlighted. So, finally, there is an appreciation of Bhartrhari, but not for reasons of either style or expression which Kosambi had begun his essay with. Bhartrhari continued to figure in Kosambi's horizon: he eventually examined some 400 Bhartrhari manuscripts, culminating in a critical edition of the *Satakatrayam* in 1945 and a further critical edition of a Bhartrhari recension in 1946.

By this time, 1945, Kosambi had been invited by the scientist Homi Bhabha to join the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) in Bombay as professor of mathematics; he remained there till 1962. The TIFR years were marked by an uninterrupted spate of writings on texts and coins, aspects of ancient India, and books that synthesized his view of ancient India. Naturally, Kosambi's mathematical research continued; in 1949, he delivered lectures on tensor analysis at the University of Chicago and spent time at the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton, where he met with Einstein. The US would figure on his Indological horizon as well. In 1951, he was invited to produce a critical edition of the *Subhasitaratnakosa*, which was eventually published in the Harvard Oriental Series in 1957. The invitation had come from Daniel Ingalls, a professor at Harvard University, and a scholar who also became his friend. Kosambi's friend from his Fergusson College days, V.V. Gokhale, would be his co-editor.

The *Subhasitaratnakosa* was an anthology of Sanskrit poetry compiled by Vidyakara in the twelfth century. Kosambi's study of it followed that of his exposition of Bhartrhari. Vidyakara was

shown, on the basis of internal textual evidence, to have compiled his anthology at the Jagaddala Vihara in Malda in the time of the Pala dynasty. In a memorable deduction, he tells us that the poet was unmistakably a Bengali since he 'brags of the large number of pond fish, highly spiced and fried in oil, that he had gulped down without even troubling to wash up first' (Kosambi 1957: 729). As before, he found Vidyakara's text wanting in comparison to Western poets. Kosambi could not recall a single *subhasita* or epigram which could compare with what was expressed in a stanza in Blake's *Jerusalem: The Hymn*, which is quoted in extenso by him (ibid. 1957: 744):

Bring me my bow of burning gold;
Bring me my arrow of desire;
Bring me my spear: O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!
I will not cease from mental flight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

That England's most popular patriotic song should be compared with verses composed several hundred years ago by a poet of east India is a parallel that tells us rather more about Kosambi's literary interests and the extraordinary ideas that he sought in Vidyakara's work than about the *Subhasitaratnakosa*. Unusual literary analogies are in fact an intrinsic part of Kosambi's writings. The introduction he wrote to *Myth and Reality* (1962), a collection of essays based upon the fusion of fieldwork with texts, quotes long stanzas from Robert Graves' *White Goddess* and the *Illiad*. While the comparisons are not entirely successful as explanatory devices, they do reveal the range of Kosambi's reading and the ways in which he could use his thoughts on ancient India to show his deep appreciation of Western literature.

Similarly, Kosambi's assessment of Vidyakara's exploration of love perhaps reveals more about his own sensibilities than Vidyakara's ideas. It seems that, at least on one count, he believed that

medieval Indian poetry was better than modern Western verse. In medieval Indian poetry, there was hardly any prostitution and no 'homosexuality or other abnormalities that now seem proper literary material in the West' (ibid.: 729). Instead, 'this is love in the direct Indian tradition, sensuous erotic experience that left visible marks (of teeth and nails) upon both participants' (ibid.). The distinction that he perceives and highlights between an Indian sense of love and eroticism as against a Western one is surprising, for in the 1950s it was well known that in early India, same sex love was as common as in the West, certainly acceptable enough to be depicted on temple carvings and on ordinary terracottas. In any case, as with Bhartrhari, after offering samplers of ancient erotica, Kosambi reveals that he is more impressed with the poet's allusions to mundane elements, as when a 'dog chases a cat, quail pick up seed at the edge of a muddy field, sparrows scratch in plowed furrows' or when 'a bull startles the peasant woman butting his way into the hut' (ibid.: 729). Again, class figures centrally. How it limited the writings of poets of that time is to Kosambi a matter of great interest. Their work, he says, was steeped in an atmosphere of luxury, parasitism, and decay because of the class that patronized it. Its fundamental limitation was that it was a literature 'of and for a class, not a people'. For the same reason, Kosambi is known to have admired Dandin, the famous Sanskrit writer of prose and poetry. It was not enough that there was the verve, gusto, gentle humour, and irony in Dandin's work. It was the way in which this was combined with his 'extensive knowledge of life among all strata of common people' which made him peerless (Kosambi 1956: 289).

Kosambi's interest in class analysis was criticized strongly by the Harvard Oriental Series editor, Daniel Ingalls, in his preface to the Vidyakara volume (1957). While pointing to the genuineness of the Kosambi–Gokhale reading, he underlined that he himself 'judged the artistic merits of the poems to be higher' than Kosambi did because he felt that 'a class theory, while it may explain to some extent the content of a literature, is a very improper guide to its excellence'. A similar sentiment was expressed by A.L. Basham, another scholar-friend of Kosambi, when he argued that 'many of

Professor Kosambi's most valuable insights into his country's history are derived from his Marxism. A certain lack of sympathy for many aspects of the ancient culture of India, and a tendency to judge the past from the point of view of the present, may also stem from the same Marxism' (Basham 1967).

Ancient texts formed merely one of the areas that Kosambi explored during his TIFR days. His recognition as a foundational historian of ancient India really rests on the book that he wrote there—*An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Kosambi 1956). His definition of history 'as the presentation, in chronological order, of successive developments in the means and relations of production' that the book begins with, sets the tone (ibid.: 1). India's past in its entirety is seen through that prism—beginning with the pre-class society of prehistoric India, to the class structure of the riparian Indus civilization, moving right into medieval feudalism and the bourgeois methods of exploitation pioneered by the British in India.

The past and present is viewed as a continuum, and this way of looking at history, for Kosambi, is rooted in the nature of the land itself. 'India is a country of long survivals', wrote Kosambi, where 'people of the atomic age rub elbows with those of the chalcolithic' (ibid.: 8). It is for this reason that he believed that fieldwork was central not merely for recovering the remains of antiquity on the ground but also for understanding the lives and manners of all kinds of people who continued to live there. The element of continuity is highlighted by photographs that accompanied the book, in which an Indus seal depicting a humped bull, and a Gandharan Buddhist sculpture depicting a plough were placed alongside a bull in modern Benares, and a buffalo relaxing in Poona. If Kosambi had had his way, he would have made the buffalo India's national animal, and his explanation for this is delightful (ibid.: lxiv): 'Heavy, dark, sluggish, hardy, fertile, productive with little care, far cleaner than it looks, docile enough to be led by a child, but suspicious of innovations and perfectly capable when roused, of charging a tiger

or a locomotive, the buffalo would be a fitting national symbol for India.'

These delightful asides notwithstanding, to what extent did Kosambi's *Introduction* succeed in sketching out a scheme of evolution in which the Indian past can be seen as the development in chronological order of basic changes in the means and relations of production? Kosambi's exploration of prehistory ('The Heritage of Pre-Class Society') did not succeed in making visible a pre-class tribal society, partly because of the thin evidence on which it was based. He says less there about the remnants of those who peopled the prehistoric past, and much more on tribal survivals in modern India. Thick detail is largely limited to what had been observed by him in and around Poona where he lived. Kosambi's justification for this was that 'the difference between the locality selected and any other in India will be primarily of detail, not of substance' (ibid.: 27). But the use of such a small sample for making large generalizations would appear as a lazy explanation as also an unconvincing one.

Actually, his description is the account of an engaged fieldworker who imbibed many different realities first-hand. He would return again and again to the heterogeneous ancient and modern juxtapositions, to the lowland track 'behind the cricket field of the Fergusson College' where microliths were found, to the ways in which trade routes followed microlithic tracks. Interestingly enough, Poona seems to have had a similar effect on another of Kosambi's contemporaries, the archaeologist H.D. Sankalia. He apparently found so many scrapers and cleavers around the diorite dyke near his residence in Deccan College that his colleagues used to tell him that he was actually occupying the site of his prehistoric residence! (Sankalia 1978) Of course, when Sankalia wrote the *Prehistory and Protohistory of India and Pakistan* (1963), Maharashtra figured only as one element in the larger archaeological mosaic of the Indian subcontinent. The same balance cannot be discerned in Kosambi's *Introduction*. Perhaps, prehistory would have been far more visible if he had taken the trouble of using and citing the work of his predecessors and contemporaries. If he had

done so, he would also have noticed that from the nineteenth century onwards juxtapositions of the kind that fascinated him had been documented and used to impart meaning to prehistoric remains. Robert Bruce Foote, the pioneer prehistorian of India, was one of those who had offered an explanation for the neolithic ash mounds of Bellary by drawing attention to the burning of accumulated cow dung inside African zaribas and to the Caribbean method of celt hafting to explain the absence of perforation in neolithic specimens from South India (Foote 1887).

Class figures prominently in Kosambi's analysis of the Indus civilization. For him, the main question was how this civilization's class structure was maintained (Kosambi 1956: 62). Since the cities 'rested upon trade, not fighting' and since the 'tools of violence' in the form of weapons are flimsy, what 'helped the trader maintain his unequal sharing of profit?' The explanation for him lay in religion. The centrality of religion in understanding India is developed at length by him in his analysis of the historical period, a reflection of which he saw at Harappa and Mohenjodaro. The Indus civilization, he believed, had much in common with Hinduism. The human figures on stamp seals, Kosambi noted, 'showed a bearded three-faced deity which has some of the attributes of the later Hindu god Siva. For that matter, iconotropic seals from the Indus may explain many legends of later Hinduism, as say that of Trisanku' (ibid.: 64). Further, he recognized the tree that was most worshipped in India—the pipal—on representations of Indus seals. This was an explanation that was rooted in the description of Indus religion that is contained in what John Marshall, the director general of the Archaeological Survey of India under whom the Indus civilization was discovered, wrote in the first excavation report on Mohenjodaro (Marshall 1931). It was also similar to what his fellow historian Ramesh Chandra Majumdar in *Ancient India* (1952) surmised about Indus religion. Majumdar, too, like Kosambi, recognized Siva and the sacred pipal in the Indus civilization. None of them betrayed any preoccupation with what it meant to locate the long story of Hinduism in eternal archetypes, where the contrasts of complexity and scale that exist from antiquity to modernism are not taken into consideration.

There are, of course, important differences. Majumdar's is a traditional history and did not aspire to present an analysis of the forces and relations of production in ancient India as was the aim of Kosambi. In it, while political, cultural, and religious conditions in different phases are carefully described, no insights from either ethnography or the historical sources of other lands light up the narrative as in the case of Kosambi. But, equally, the similarities are worth mentioning since Kosambi and Majumdar are usually placed on opposite sides of the political spectrum. Those similarities are not confined to their understanding of archaeological phenomena like Indus seals. They shared similar ideas about sources. When, for instance, Majumdar (ibid.: 7) noted that 'Indians displayed a strange indifference towards properly recording the public events of their country', it is not very different from Kosambi's view that 'it is precisely the episodes—lists of dynasties and kings, tales of war and battle spiced with anecdote . . . that are missing in Indian texts'. Similarly, there is a fundamental agreement about how the Indus civilization was destroyed—by a hardy group of Aryans that entered India from the north-west. Majumdar believed that Aryan marauders destroyed the forts and cities of the Indus people (who he believed were Dravidian) and burnt their houses, also reducing a large number of them to slaves (ibid.: 30). A strong echo of this can be seen in Kosambi's argument that the Rigvedic Aryans killed the Indus civilization. Interestingly, the view that the Aryans destroyed the Indus civilization was under serious question even while Kosambi and Majumdar wrote about them with the utmost confidence. There is enough about a temperamental Indus river in the 1930s' and 1940s' reports of John Marshall and Ernest Mackay on Mohenjodaro and Chanhu-daro to make us wonder why these historians did not at least in the 1950s acknowledge that there could have been causes other than an Aryan invasion to explain the collapse of the Indus civilization.

In the case of Kosambi, it is possible that, notwithstanding the flimsy evidence, he stuck to the invasion argument because his theory of the emergence of the caste system was crucially dependent upon it. In his *Introduction*, he claimed that the Indus settlers were the *dasyus* or *dasas* (conquered people) and the *panis* (traders) of

the Rigveda. On other occasions, he argued that while many of the conquered Indus people were reduced to serfdom, the culturally advanced priests of the Indus civilization were able to impose themselves upon their conquerors. If, to put it another way, Kosambi saw the Brahmans as having developed through an intermixing with the older Indus priesthood and the Aryans, obviously, the context in which these two phenomena first confronted each other—invasion—could hardly be jettisoned.

Overall, in Kosambi's *Introduction* we find a picture of India after the 'Aryan invasions' which is largely, though not exclusively, confined to North India. Settlements in the Deccan plateau do not figure until more than half the book is done, over a large part of which the Aryans are depicted as triumphantly sweeping across India, from the north-west where the Aryan hordes destroy the Indus civilization to the 'wilderness of the east' which they settle. In the process, pastoral raiders become agrarian food producers. It is not that Kosambi lacks a sense of different social and cultural groups coexisting in India. The main story, however, is that of the Aryans colonizing and incorporating them. Today, the archaeological landscape of the vast Gangetic plains, unlike the 1950s when Kosambi wrote, is very different. There is an impressive body of archaeological evidence about the regional cultures of ancient North India, whose chronology and character cannot be integrated with the putative Aryans of the Vedic texts. These are discoveries that post-date the life and writings of Kosambi, so one can hardly fault him for being unaware of them.

Still, it is somewhat amazing that a scholar who displayed such an acute sense of the coexistence in modern India of groups at different social and economic levels of existence, stopped short of showing discomfort with a history of ancient India which, instead of being informed by the presence of a multi-hued human mosaic, was a saga of foreign invasions, subjugation, and incorporation. It was a tale in which pre-agricultural societies were destined to be subjugated or incorporated into an agricultural way of life because this was considered to be a more superior mode of production. And those who still stubbornly remained food gatherers 'through

inertia, tribal solidarity, common ritual' were the modern tribal remnants. Many decades later, the historian Sumit Guha showed that Kosambi's idea of forager communities as living fossils was at variance with what his own fieldwork had thrown up in Poona: 'when Kosambi himself carried out a pioneering foray into ethnohistory by discussing the Phase Pardhi community near Pune in the context of this hypothesis, he observed that as soon as the Pardhi community in question got access to some land they started growing vegetables, and were even prepared to pay rent to the alleged owner—so it could be argued that they had not intruded into the agricultural economy, but had been extruded from it' (Guha 1998: 432).

There is, in fact, a qualitative difference in the field observations on specific communities that Kosambi offered and the general statements that he made about tribals. In the history of early India that Kosambi sketched, it was these general statements that provided the narrative frame—where the story of the spread of agriculture is the one that seems to matter, where hunter-gatherers were either in the process of being incorporated or kept voluntarily out of expanding agricultural regimes. Perhaps if Kosambi had not considered the issue of a spreading agricultural economy as *the* issue in the material milieu of ancient India, the picture that he projected of it may have been as culturally diverse as what he so arrestingly outlined when he wrote about Poona and its surrounding regions.

Prehistory and the transitions that marked its long passage continued their strong hold on D.D. Kosambi through the rest of his life. In the 1960s, near his beloved Poona, he continued to observe and write about prehistoric rock engravings, and about microliths and megaliths, and as always, these were seamlessly woven into what Kosambi called the living prehistory of India that was, he argued, kept alive by tribal people. Perhaps, his last piece of writing before he died in 1966 was centred on prehistory. Like his first foray into history, and unlike most of his later writings, this too

was a short story. 'The Hump on Nandi's Back' sought to communicate the prehistoric past to children.

The story unfolds as a conversation between a human being ('Rama, son of the village headman'), a tree (the 'old Bo tree'), and certain fauna ('Old Naag, the Cobra', 'Sher, the tiger', 'Rama's dog, Moti', 'the great bull Nandi'). The setting, a pond on the edge of a forest 'beneath the Bo tree of the village god', is used by Kosambi to explain to his young readers about how humans evolved from hunter-gatherers to agriculturists. Thousands of years ago, humans were like the animals of today, gathering food: 'They climbed trees for fruits and nuts. They plucked berries and mushrooms. Yams came out of the ground. Like Bhalu they would gather honey. They caught fish just as Bhalu does with his paw.' Over time, they domesticated animals. Rama wants to know how humans made dogs like his Moti. The Bo tree told him about how some wolf cubs in the company of men grew tame over time. The Bo tree had also seen a time when men ate leaves and grass seeds which, through a process of experimentation, they later learnt to cultivate: 'All grasses are not alike. Man found that these nice grasses grew best in soft ground. You don't get soft ground very often. But if you dig yams with a sharp stick, the grass grows better there next year. So, man made holes in the grass for fat grass seeds.'

'Man made himself what he is' is the theme that runs through the story, reminding us of the title of a famous work of the Marxist prehistorian Gordon Childe called *Man Makes Himself* (1951).

The importance of Kosambi's historical oeuvre for those interested in things literary is connected with the fact that this man made himself. A mathematician by profession, he trained himself to be a historian. Even as Kosambi the historian read written records while recording living people and ancient parallels to them, he wrote deliberately in a way that gives us a glimpse of Kosambi the man. That the man was born and grew up in Goa, with prolific literary interests honed at Harvard, and who spent much of his working life asking questions about India's past, many times through the prism of what he observed in its present—all this provides the picture of a kind of Indian historian that is all too rare. One might add, in the end, that the defining identity tag of Marxist

historian that came to be attached to Kosambi is perhaps what has also diminished an appreciation of this unusual mixture of qualities in his writings.

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Notes

1. I have analysed Kosambi's *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (1956) and not his later work, *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline* (1965). This is because the latter was a simplified condensed popular version of the former, broadly following the same framework and enunciating similar ideas. It even included several photographs that had been used in *An Introduction*. The most striking difference to me appears to be in the introductory sections of the two books. Whereas *An Introduction* was interspersed with long quotations from the works of Karl Marx, those are missing in *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India*. Equally striking is the opening paragraph to a subsection on 'The Difficulties Facing the Historian' in *The Culture*, where Kosambi (1965: 8–9) strikes a strong nationalistic note. Here, he seems to be contesting the claims of British historians of India like Vincent Smith whose *History of India* is an example of the textbook that Kosambi had in mind when he wrote about 'foreigners' and their textbooks. The paragraph is worth quoting in full:

> What has been said so far might lend colour to the theory sometimes expressed that India was never a nation, that Indian culture and civilisation is a by-product of foreign conquest, whether Muslim or British. If this were so, the only Indian history worth writing would be the history of and by the conquerors. The textbooks that the foreigner has left behind him naturally heighten this impression. But when Alexander of Macedon was drawn to the East by the fabulous wealth and magic name of India, England and France were barely coming into the Iron Age. The discovery of America was due to the search for new trade routes to India; a reminder of this is seen in the name 'Indians' given to the American aborigines. The Arabs, when they were intellectually the most progressive and active people in the world, took their treatises on medicine and a good deal of their mathematics from Indian sources. Asian culture and civilisation have China and India as their two primary sources. Cotton textiles (even words like 'calico', 'chintz', 'dungaree', 'pyjama', 'sash' and 'gingham' are of Indian origin) and sugar are India's specific contribution to everyday life, just as paper, tea, porcelain, silk are China's.

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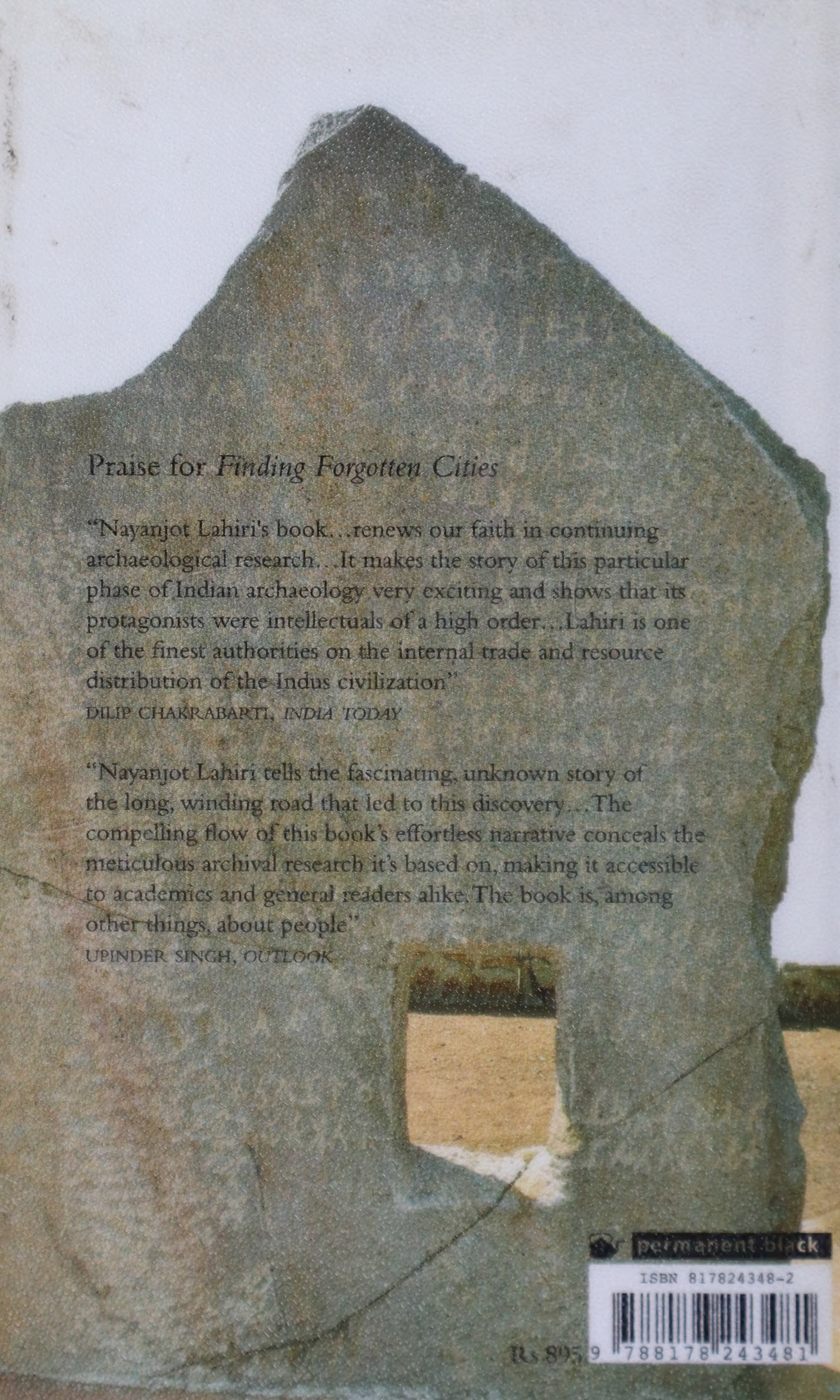

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